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No. 1061
23 August –
5 September 2002
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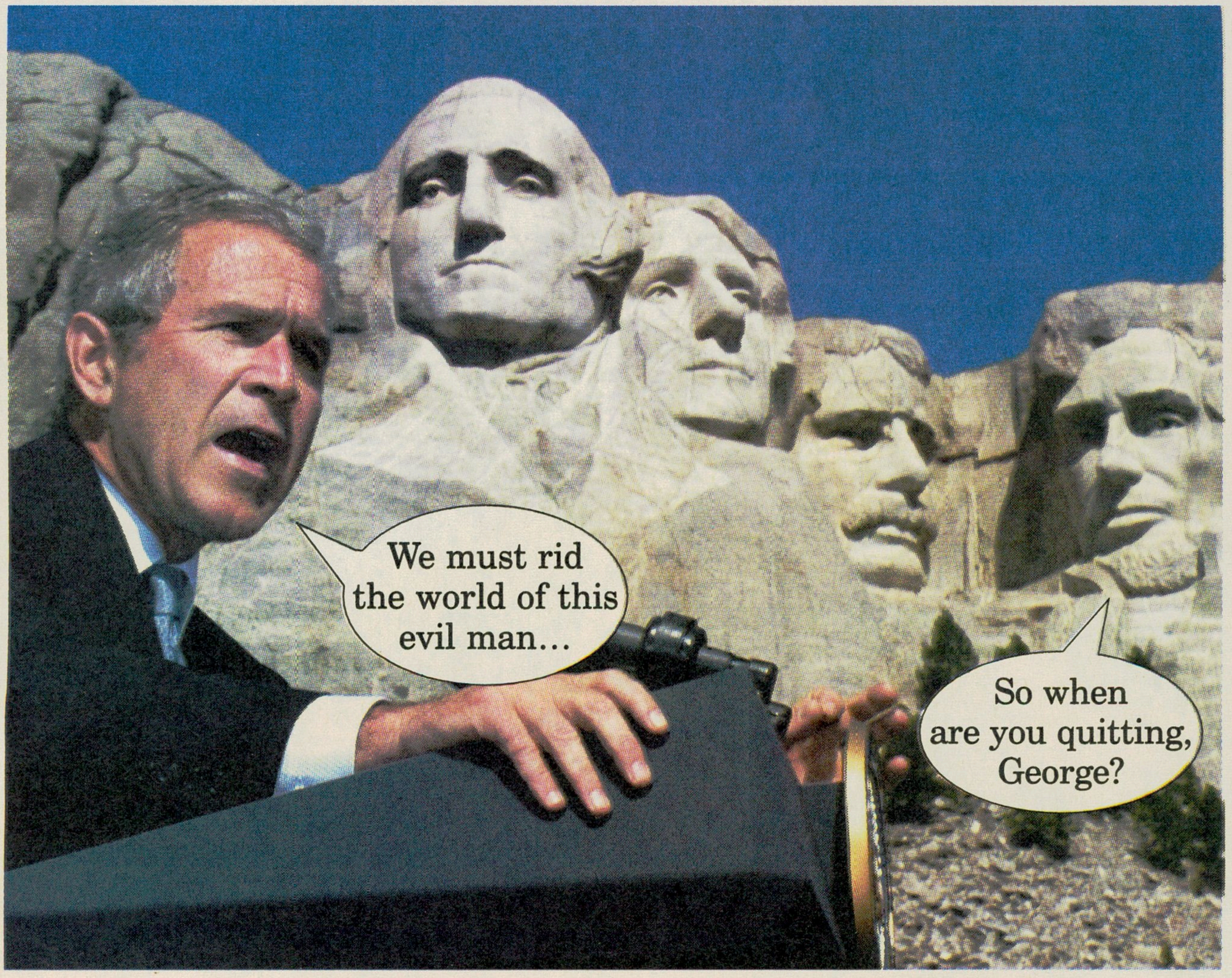

BUSH SPELLS IT OUT

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A STATEMENT

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Bon voyage!

E. Strobes
pp. Lord Gnome
Emu House
Gatwick.

"I come to Austria for the skiing"

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES
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020-7923 5402

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ . **Distributed** by P.E. Distributions, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017.

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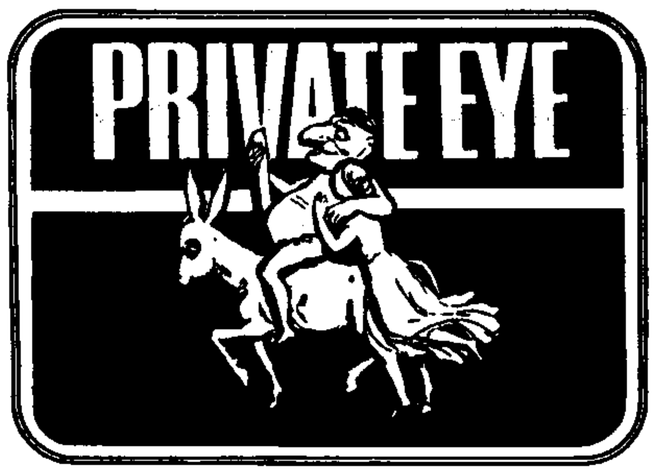

Bush whacking...

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WHY is Britain honouring the economist Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board, whose asides are said to be responsible for the moving of squillions of dollars between the world's various tax havens?

Greenspan is America's Delphic central banker; and given that he has prepared and presided over the worst stock market debacle since Herbert Hoover caught his bits in the mangle during the Wall Street crash, this autumn's knighthood here will be a piece of high-level fakery.

But that didn't stop some clown at the treasury gushing the other day that the K was to recognise Greenspan's "contribution to global economic stability"; nor burbling that "the award is in recognition of... the benefit that the UK has received from the wisdom and skill". City bankers who are only just totting up what they lost thanks to Greenhorn's heroic incompetence may disagree.

It was Greenhorn who last year accepted the Enron Prize, thus associating the Federal Reserve with financial criminality. He took the award at the ludicrous James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University in Houston, Texas, which is just down the road from the shysters whose cavorting in the energy market lost so many people their livelihoods and pensions.

Despite being deeply involved in the Enron scandal, the "institute" has the brass neck to continue to describe itself "as strictly non-partisan and dedicated to the highest standards of intellectual excellence and integrity with the goal of helping bridge the gap between the theory and practice of public policy".

And what of the US central banker's most recent pronouncements? They have been teasingly gnomic. "With profitable opportunities for malfeasance markedly diminished, far fewer questionable practices are likely to be initiated in the immediate future," he mumbled. So arise Sir Alan Greenhorn KBE – aka Kept Boosting Enron.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"WE are more than 85,000 strong, with 390 offices in 84 countries. But no matter where you go, or whom you talk to, our voice remains the same. We act with one vision, without boundaries. Our founder, Arthur Andersen, was never interested in creating 'just another accounting firm'."

— Arthur Andersen entry in online accountancy directory.

TONY BLAIR has come in for some stick in recent weeks for including a cohort of big business cronies in the 70-strong British delegation to the earth summit in Johannesburg later this month.

But at least one of Tony's cronies on the plane to Jo'burg has a serious interest in matters environmental. Step forward Dr Chris Fay, chairman since June 1999 of the government's advisory committee on business and the environment.

Fay, a busy chap, is former chairman and chief executive of Shell UK and currently a non-executive director of Ango-American plc, chairman of Expro International, deputy chairman of Stena International and a non-executive director of BAA and Weir Group.

Weir, a Glasgow-based manufacturer of pumps for the oil industry, was one of a number of western companies criticised in a report on human rights abuses in the Sudan published by the charity Christian Aid in March last year, a few weeks after Fay joined the board.

Christian Aid reported that the (Islamic) government of Sudan was clearing huge tracts of (Christian) southern Sudan to make way for oil production by operating a "scorched earth" policy. Troops and *mujahideen* militias were terrorising and killing civilians, burning homes and attacking villages from the air.

Weir had a £20m contract to supply pumping stations for a 1,000-mile pipeline from the oilfields to the Red Sea – enabling Sudan to boost its production from 185,000-200,000 barrels per day to 400,000 and doubling Khartoum's revenues from oil – revenues which are used to buy more arms with which to prosecute its civil war against the Christian south and fund extreme Islamic groups.

So that's what's meant by "sustainable development"!

SCHOOL leavers' impressive A-level results have again triggered the old mantra that the exams must be getting easier. So far there is no serious suggestion that the three exam boards have in any way cocked-up the marking.

The same cannot be said for GCSEs where examiners continue to tell horror stories of being sent wrong or late-arriving exam scripts. The latest comes from an English examiner for AQA, the Assessment and Qualification Alliance. After training and after the exam date she waited… and telephone AQA… and rang again… and still waited to be sent exam scripts for marking.

Three weeks after the exam, with time set aside for marking rapidly eroding, she finally received a letter saying 199 scripts were on their way. But only 79 turned up. She marked them and then telephoned again… and again… and kept waiting for the rest. Eventually another 100 arrived just four days before the examiner was due to leave the country. Anxious not to let down the students, she marked them all. "I tried to do them conscientiously, but it grieves and appals me to think of the disservice to our unsuspecting GCSE candidates."

She also wrote a letter of concern to AQA's bosses. But as with her phone calls, there has so far been no response. The answer of course should be to abolish AQA, along with Edexhell and OCR, and like any other country to have a single system to ensure simplicity and consistency.

"They've taken the new ball"

Street Of Shame

DENIZENS of Piccadilly may have noticed a twinkly-eyed *boulevardier* outside the offices of Messrs Heidrick & Struggles, executive search consultants, in Burlington Gardens. Who is this latter-day Freddy Eynsford-Hill, gazing at an upstairs window while singing "I have often walked down this street before/But the pavement always stayed beneath my feet before..."?

Step forward Peter McKay, aka Ephraim Hardcastle of the *Daily Mail*. Although McHackey turned 60 last month, he still has quite a spring in his step. And, increasingly often, those steps lead him to Ms Tashy Lassalle, a young head-hunter at Heidrick & Struggles who is at least 35 years his junior.

Does McHackey hope she'll find him a new opening somewhere? Or is he offering his own services as a "mentor"? Either way, as the sexagenarian hack chirrups increasingly often these days, isn't life grand?

HACKS at the *Sunday Telegraph* are all fabulously wealthy – at least they are according to their well-heeled editor, Dominic Lawson.

He has banned staff from using the word millionaire to describe a person. On no account should they mention millionaire performers, millionaire writers or millionaire entrepreneurs.

And why would the *Sunday Torygraph* of all papers want to ban a word guaranteed to get middle England aspirants salivating? Lawson told hacks the description has become meaningless because "all of us are millionaires now".

"CRIME Rate Soars in Ibiza", warned a shock-horror report in the *Daily Telegraph*'s travel section on Saturday 10 August. Revealing that owners of luxury homes in the island "complained that they dared not go out in the evening for fear of break-ins", it added that many foreign residents were beginning to sell up and move out – a trend "widely regarded as a disaster for the local economy".

And what was the cover story in the *Telegraph* Saturday magazine the very same day? "Hipper Than Ever: How Ibiza Reclaimed Its Cool." The drooling five-page feature claimed that "in the past two years property prices have risen by an average of 40 percent, pushed up by demand from consumers typified by Ibiza regulars Stella McCartney and Kate Moss" – because Ibiza "has that magical quality that people seem to be willing to pay for".

***TIMES* hack Giles "son of Alan" Coren is a hot contender for media prima donna of the year, after despatching the following memo to the editor of his paper's review-and-listings section *Play* two weeks ago when he noticed that a single word had been changed in his review of Mark Dunn's novel *Ella Minnow Pea*. Readers of a sensitive disposition may wish to cover their eyes now:**

"The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. How fucking difficult is that? It's the sentence that bestrides the fucking book I reviewed for you. It is the sentence I wrote first in my fucking review. It is 35 fucking letters long, which is why I wrote that it was. And so some useless cunt sub-editor decides to change it to 'jumps over *a* lazy dog'. Can you fucking count? Can you see that that makes it a 33-letter sentence? So it looks as if I can't count, and the cunting author of the book, poor Mr Dunn, cannot count. The whole bastard book turns on the sentence being as I fucking wrote it. and that it is exactly 35 letters long. Why do you meddle? What do you think you achieve with that kind of dumb-witted smart-arsery? Why do you change things you do not understand without consulting? Why do you believe you know best when you know fuck all, jack shit? That is as bad as editing can be. Fuck, I hope you're proud. It will be small relief for the author that nobody reads your poxy magazine. Never ever ask me to write something for you. And don't pay me. I'd rather take 400 quid for assassinating a crack whore's only child in a revenge killing for a busted drug deal – my integrity would be less compromised. Jesus fucking wept, I don't know what else to say."

Oh dear. Poor little diddums!

THE *Sunday Times Magazine* of 21 July congratulated Eric Schiller of San Francisco on being the second winner of the readers' chess prize for "game of the month". This prize is awarded for the game judged by the newspaper's own chess correspondent to be the best he receives each month.

Schiller is reasonably well known in British chess circles, being a close friend for more than 20 years of the dodgy chess impresario Raymond Keene (aka "The Penguin") and Keene's co-author on three chess books – *World Champion Combinations*, *Batsford Chess Openings* and *Winning with the Hypermodern*. Schiller has also been hired by Keene on various occasions to assist with events that the Penguin helped organise, including "The *Times* World Chess Championship" in 1993.

How intriguing then that the *Sunday Times*'s own chess correspondent and the judge for this prize is none other than, er, Raymond Keene.

MORE news from the mini-*Mail*, aka the London *Evening Standard*, where editor Veronica Wadley continues her cull of established writers.

The latest to go is Andrew Jefford, the *Standard*'s award-winning wine writer who was hired to write a column back in 1992. When Wadley arrived at the paper the three-page food and drink section was inexplicably scaled back to two pages. Instead of penning a wide-range of articles on the world of drink Jefford was told to simply write about the wine list of whatever restaurant Fay Maschler was reviewing that week.

At the end of July the paper's managing editor Jeanette Arnold told him the paper no longer wanted his columns and would cease paying him from the next day. The same day a fax arrived from Wadley announcing that she was "sorry".

So why the sudden and unexplained sacking? Evidently she had a brilliant plan for Jefford's former page? Er, no. On the day he left Jefford's page was filled with mind-numbing revelations such as "Remember, even Gwyneth Paltrow and Kylie have cellulite" and where to get the season's must-have swimming trunks as sported by Jerry Hall's new boyfriend.

"Oh no! Adam Ants!"

LEST we forget, Richard Desmond isn't the first pornographer to own a national newspaper: tubby sleaze-merchant David Sullivan, proprietor of *Sunday Sport*, beat him to it by many years.

Now Sullivan's long-standing consort Eve Vorley, who is also "chief operations officer" of the *Sport* empire, has launched her own sex aids catalogue. As she explains: "I love the feeling that sex gives me, and sex toys add to my pleasure... I can personally recommend all of the amazing toys on offer as I have tried them all with amazing results."

One is the "Arab Strap", a device involving metal rings and leather. "I strapped this around my partner's penis and balls," Eve reveals, "and could not believe how it maintained his rock-hard erection." Which might explain Sullivan's peculiar gait during TV appearances.

Vorley's catalogue also offers a "Penis Developer – the high tech way to a bigger penis", "Super Delay Stud Cream For Men", "Enlargo Development Cream" and the "World Famous Chartham Penis Regime". Alas, she doesn't disclose just how effective David found these particular products, but a clue can be found in Vorley's lavish praise for the plastic "Penis Extension", a bargain at £7.95. "I felt the need for a few extra inches so I slipped this over my partner's penis – the results were truly amazing, the ride of my life."

Could it be that Sullivan's deficiencies in this area spurred him on to become the success that he is today?

READERS of the *Telegraph* Saturday magazine will no doubt have been drooling over the delightful feature on Gifford's Circus that adorned the interiors section of the magazine late last month.

Over five pages a hackette named Clover Hughes waxed lyrical, claiming that "Gifford's Circus fulfils every childhood fantasy of what a circus should be." And she should know: the circus's Nell Gifford is Hughes's sister. No doubt Nell was most grateful for the puff – the third time in a year the circus has had a *Telegraph* write-up.

"JUST when you were wondering whether there was room in the world for another 'Top Ten Films of All Time' list, two come along at once," Fiona Morrow wrote in a *Times* feature comparing the recent *Sight & Sound* list, based on an international poll of film directors and critics, with the *Time Out* list, based on a survey of its readers.

Morrow had no doubt which was better. Dismissing the *Sight & Sound* list as "a dry-as-dust affair... an absolute snore", she praised the "richness and diversity" of taste displayed by *Time Out* readers, who "aren't wary of embracing the new". Her piece was also liberally seasoned with quotes from the *TO* film critic, Tom Charity.

By happy coincidence Fiona Morrow, author of this extended plug for *Time Out*, is married to Tom Charity.

"ONE of the things that makes me most angry about this government is its policy on drugs," the Tory peer and lobbyist Lord "Tinker" Bell thunders in the *Sunday Express*. "We seem to be in a position where it is neither legal nor illegal to smoke marijuana... Surely the abuse of drugs should be underpinned by strong law and strong views from the establishment."

Tim Bell is, of course, a prominent member of the establishment himself. And, although he absent-mindedly omits to mention it, he was for many years a prodigious coke-snorter. If milord Bell is so eager to see "strong law" applied to drug-users, why not set an example by turning himself in to Inspector Knacker and demanding to be prosecuted?

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Horror for [Chris] Evans As He Sees Friend Plunge to Death From Party Yacht."

— Page 11, *Daily Mail*, 9 August.

"Every Picture Tells a Story. What is Chris Evans saying to his wife Billie Piper?... Our weekly picture feature offers you the chance to write an amusing caption in the speech bubble in the picture."

— Page 62, *Daily Mail*, 9 August.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

ENO's new season brochure – hastily amended to remove references to Nicholas Payne – has provoked wry amusement with its cover line *Today-Tomorrow* and a cringing message from Paul Daniel promising a season "full of happy memories for today and thrilling promises for tomorrow".

That's some claim from a company in such crisis. And it's a shame that, turning the page, the item headed *Myth-Truth* is about the forthcoming *Ring* and not ENO coming clean about the truth of what's been happening at the Coliseum.

Certainly almost the entire London arts establishment is rallying around Payne, the brutally dispatched general-director, against Martin Smith, the banker-chairman who brutally dispatched him. Several other Smith victims are emerging from the woodwork too. His short time in office has seen the departures of many senior managers including marketing director Maggie Sedwards, fundraising director Russell Vallance and finance director Graeme Wallace. Some of these departures were extremely acrimonious and they raise interesting issues about Smith's own appointment.

One is that ENO's ticketing database – which covers 275,000 opera-goers over the past 15 years – has no record of Smith having ever attended a performance at ENO before his introduction to the board. Of course it may be that he came as someone's guest or slipped in at the last minute paying cash; but it suggests he was never a regular attendee and has never been steeped in ENO's culture.

Another is that Smith's elevation to the board was closely connected with a pledge of £3m toward ENO's rebuilding fund which then never materialised – or at least, not on the terms the then fundraising director had been led to expect. The company thought it was getting a straight gift. But Smith then said it was only a promise to make good the shortfall if funds weren't raised from other sources.

As things stand, it's clear Smith has given *something* because his name appears in print as a principal patron of the rebuilding. But ENO staff – and more particularly, ex-staff – believe the full terms of his pledge have never been honoured and claim their attempts to find out have been frustrated from above. In the interests of sorting *Myth* from *Truth*, perhaps Smith, or someone on his board, could clear this up.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

BLACKWATCH

Barbara Amiel

ALTHOUGH *Daily Telegraph* staff have endured many months of cost-cutting and belt-tightening, at least one hackette at the paper isn't feeling the pinch. With perfect timing, *Torygraph* columnist Barbara Amiel (who is also the wife of proprietor Conrad Black) has chosen this moment to invite American *Vogue* to inspect her wardrobe.

"In her luxurious dressing suite, two floors above where we're sitting, there are so many closets it takes two rooms (connected by a short hall with walk-in closets – one for day clothes, one for night) to hold them," writes the enraptured *Vogue* hackette Julia Reed. In one walk-in cupboard Reed counts more than a dozen Hermes Birkin bags made of crocodile-skin, and 30 or 40 of Renaud Pellegrino's jewel-handled handbags; on shelves across the hall are well over 100 pairs of Manolo Blahnik high-heels, while scores more Blahnik and Chanel flatties are stacked on the floor "two and three pairs deep". (Incidentally, Barbara wears kitten heels for parties with the Queen, because "Buckingham Palace floors don't like stilettos" – a useful tip.)

According to *Vogue*, Amiel attributes her need for all this clutter "not to her busy career as a columnist with the *Daily Telegraph* of London" – just as well, since her output these days runs to no more than one column every month or two – but to the slight she suffered as a teenager when a boyfriend's mother made fun of her beige silk two-piece. "I sort of never forgot it," Barbara says. "And now I have an extravagance that knows no bounds." However, she claims that although milord Black buys her couture outfits (because she needs them for "his life"), she pays for all her own day-to-day clothes, mostly from Chanel. Which raises the question of just how much the *Telegraph* pays for her occasional contributions, and whether it's getting value for money.

Barbara has many talents – not least the gift of prophecy, as she demonstrated shortly before the second round of the French presidential election this year. "Though the chances of Le Pen winning the run-off are very slim," she wrote, "the vote for him could easily be 20 percent or more." He actually got 17.7 per cent. Her historical knowledge is equally remarkable: in a column praising America's benign influence, she disclosed that "there has not been a single example of the US supporting a tyrannical regime against a freedom-loving democratic regime". What of the Greek colonels or indeed her chum Augusto Pinochet? Ah, but these were "regimes friendly or neutral to the West" and therefore apparently not really tyrannical or undemocratic at all.

Above all, however, it is Amiel's thoughtful political analysis which earns her a place on the op-ed page. "I don't know what to make of Le Pen," she confessed on 29 April. But she ploughed on anyway, ridiculing the "hysteria" of those who described Le Pen as a fascist and laughing off his comment about the gas chambers as a harmless "throwaway" intended to *épater les bourgeois*.

And yet, while smiling indulgently on a genuine anti-semite, Amiel accused British correspondents in Israel of being rampant Jew-haters merely because they tried to find out what happened in the Jenin refugee camp. While conceding that "it is possible that there may have been isolated acts of Israeli soldiers running amok", she suggested that only an anti-semite would think such incidents newsworthy.

She has also proposed that hacks should stop relying on the evidence of their own eyes and copy out official press releases instead: "If you want to read about what is going on in the fighting, log on to the Israeli Defence Force's website. It is a government source, of course, but journalists relied on the American military for information in Afghanistan." Indeed: and much of what they reported turned out to be fiction. According to Amiel, however, reporters in Israel who try to make their own inquiries rather than trusting official propaganda are "doing the work of Goebbels without bothering to wear the brown uniform identifying their agenda".

Still, there is one journalist for whom Babs has limitless respect. In March this year, commenting on a Gallup poll which found that many Muslims believed Jews had hijacked the planes which hit the World Trade Centre, she wrote that "one is inclined to look at these results with gallows humour, as did columnist George Jonas in Canada's *National Post*".

A couple of weeks later, George Jonas cited Amiel approvingly in a column for the *Ottawa Citizen*. Two weeks after that, he noted that there were a few "stellar writers in stellar publications whose analysis supports Israel firmly and consistently (as well as accurately, in my view)". They included... Barbara Amiel of the *Daily Telegraph*.

In her next column on British attitudes to Israel, the stellar Amiel observed that "the media seem to have taken the vocabulary of a 'theatre' of war literally, as George Jonas points out in his *Ottawa Citizen* column". Jonas returned the compliment yet again with a piece accusing hacks of spreading false stories about Israeli atrocities: "As Barbara Amiel put it in the *Daily Telegraph*..."

The synchronicity is sometimes uncanny. Here's Amiel in the *Daily Telegraph*: "Frankly, were I the Israelis, I wouldn't bother with a semi-effective job of keeping the press out of the war zone. I'd offer directions – the war is down that street, ma'am – and see how the press likes finding itself in crossfire or booby-trapped buildings." And here's Jonas in the *Ottawa Citizen*: "I wouldn't blame the Israeli army if, instead of trying to protect media stars from getting into a crossfire or a booby-trapped alleyway, it just pointed in the direction of the fighting. 'Looking for the war, ma'am? Two blocks straight, then turn left.'"

What both of them omit to mention in this orgy of mutual promotion is that Jonas used to be Barbara's husband and remains her best friend (apart from milord Black, of course). In an article some years ago she described him as the mentor who launched her career: "He told me to stop mucking around... and sit down at the typewriter full time. I did." As the relations of all those dead crocodiles in her handbag cupboard might agree, he has a lot to answer for.

SO who is behind Iain Duncan Smith's bold plan to introduce a new social insurance system for the National Health Service, decentralise it and offer most of it to the private sector?

Step forward former treasury mandarin Sir Steve Robson, who has just finished contributing his thoughts to a new pamphlet on the subject from the Tory-leaning think tank, Reform. Sir Steve, known in Whitehall as "Mr Privatisation", once boldly announced: "Privatisation [of the railways] has been a great success and has done a lot for the economy. We should absolutely have privatised the railways."

So who is intractably against Iain Duncan Smith's plan to extend the role of the private sector in the NHS? Why, the brooding figure of the chancellor, Gordon Brown, of course. Brown has won great plaudits from his backbench colleagues for the vigorous way he has defended the NHS and for his uncharacteristic generosity to it. Labour MPs have been delighted to discover some clear red water between "new" Labour and the Conservatives.

If only they knew that Brown had pleaded with Sir Steve "Mr Privatisation" Robson to stay on at the treasury after Labour's 1997 landslide. And who was the mastermind behind the policy that rankles most with Labour bankbenchers (a policy enthusiastically backed by Brown), the partial privatisation of the London Underground? Why, none other than Sir Steve Robson!

Mr Duncan suggested his sexuality had held him back from promotion, and said: "If I were married with two kids I might be in a different position."

Evening Standard

WITH Labour £6m in the red and the Co-operative Bank refusing to extend the party's overdraft, Tony Blair has had to turn to the despised trades unions to pay staff wages and the post bill.

How embarrassing given the Dear Leader's grand plan – as revealed to four astonished hacks in a Blackpool fish restaurant by Stephen Byers (Who he? Ed.) some years back – that the unions, being hopeless dinosaurs, to be ditched at the first opportunity in favour of go-getting entrepreneurs and businessmen.

These shiny ambassadors for Mr Tony's Cool Britannia would replace the union mutton heads in the cash stakes, thus allowing the Dear Leader to jettison John Edmonds et al along with the Clause Four baggage.

Now, though, saving the day for Labour, or rather paying the immediate post bills, are the T&G and the train drivers' union, ASLEF. Their largesse will of course come at a price. The Dear Leader will soon be required to start mouthing warm words about the European social agenda – ie improved workers' rights – much of which he has taken great delight in blocking to the fury of the unions.

Then there is the PM's Downing Street union link woman, "nasty" Nita Clark. The brothers can't stand Ms Clark, who they believe has turned native (having formerly worked as a press officer for UNISON). They want her replaced quickly. One of the ideas doing the rounds in typical Blairite fashion is to create a "Trades Union Tsar". Desperate to find someone whom the unions trust, and who knows something about the party, Downing Street has hit upon Lord Larry Whitty, a former party general-secretary and union official, as the first union tsar.

The wily Whitty is currently an agriculture minister in the Lords. Will he step in to save the day? Much depends on the Dear Leader's new-found enthusiasm for the brothers and sisters and whether it is genuine.

BRIGHTON's Labour MP Des Turner was thrilled last summer when he came fifth in a ballot to introduce a new law to parliament. He chose a worthy subject: a bill to clamp down on bad landlords and improve energy efficiency in homes.

But his grand plan quickly went wry. First, environment minister Michael Meacher tried to amend the bill, telling the committee considering it that the government couldn't give councils the cash to enforce it.

Armed with a briefing from Turner that Meacher's amendment was "sham legislation" and a "wrecking amendment", every Labour back-bencher on the committee voted against the minister.

When the Commons debated the bill the government tried once again to gut it with amendments which would see ministers setting targets for local authorities, but only if they wanted to and at any level they liked. At this point, to the shock of his Labour backbench colleagues, Turner did a speedy u-turn and his name appeared backing the government's amendments.

Tory MP Greg Barker mischievously put the Turner amendment down in his own name. What's more, he won with 17 Labour MPs joining the Tories and Lib Dems in a rare defeat for the government.

Supporters of the bill were jubilant… but only for an hour. At the end of the session Turner stopped his own bill reaching the next stage by standing on his feet and talking the bill out.

His excuse? The Tories had won with "what can only be described as a wrecking amendment". The fact that this wrecking amendment was a copy of Turner's own didn't worry the MP.

After annoying the government by introducing the bill, he upset the organisations which supported him by his change of heart. And to top it all he angered his Labour colleagues by telling his local rag that his bill had been ruined by "left-wing head-bangers" making a "pointless gesture". Nice work!

IN the week that Commission for Racial Equality chairman Gurbux Singh resigned in disgrace after his drunken altercation with a policeman, the CRE also announced the resignation of its Wales head, Dr Mashuq Ally.

After barely two years in the job, Dr Ally was suspended on 28 February over allegations of professional misconduct. The CRE did not concede this had happened though until April.

An inquiry into the allegations concluded in June, but the CRE released no details. There was evidently something for Ally to answer for as an internal disciplinary hearing was scheduled for 12 July. But the hearing was then officially "postponed". In fact Ally resigned on 11 July, the day before the hearing was due. The CRE did not confirm his resignation until 8 August.

The CRE has not revealed the nature of the allegations against Ally. There was certainly a claim of bullying of staff and it is believed there were also grievances over the award of grants during Ally's term as head of CRE Wales. But taxpayers are none the wiser.

Ally now airily dismisses any talk of complaints by referring to the lack of any disciplinary action. Resigning before the disciplinary hearing means there never could have been any disciplinary action of course. Ally simply refers to a "disagreement" and says: "I felt it was time to move on."

This is not the first time Dr Ally has moved on in controversial circumstances. In 1998 he resigned as a dean at the University of Wales, Lampeter. Earlier this year the *Sunday Times* revealed that his resignation followed an investigation by the university when an examiner queried a doctoral thesis submitted by a Saudi prince related to King Fahd. Claims of plagiarism, and evidence linking Ally with the thesis, were dismissed by him as the result of a mix up with his computer. Another case involving one of Ally's Saudi students and alleged plagiarism also emerged; but the university dealt with the issue internally and wanted to "draw a line under it".

Dr Ally is well connected in Labour Taffia circles. He's a trustee of the Bevan Foundation (a pro-Labour think tank) whose president is the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and whose vice presidents include Neil Kinnock and Michael Foot.

THE racist British National Party has welcomed the formation of Migration Watch on the grounds that "it has nothing to do with racism".

The BNP claims that Britain has "not had an anti-immigration group before", whereas in fact there have for at least 30 years been a long string of anti-immigration organisations very similar to Migration Watch whose main effect has been to provide respectable cover for racist propaganda.

A crucial ingredient of such organisations is a "retired diplomat" of eminently respectable credentials, preferably at the foreign office. For many years in the 1960s and 1970s this role was played by former foreign diplomat – and City banker - G.K. Young. The mantle of G.K. Young has now passed on to the chairman of Migration Watch, Sir Andrew Green, Britain's former ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

Some facts about Sir Andrew, none of them repeated in the gushing puffs for Migration Watch in papers like the *Daily Telegraph*, are worth remembering.

- In 1984 he was a counsellor at the British embassy in Washington, where he met Oliver North, a special adviser to President Reagan, for secret consultations on the arms for hostages negotiations with Iran.
- In 1988 he came back to London to take charge of the awkward matter of the bombing of an airliner over Lockerbie. He prevailed over the sensitive switching of suspects for the bombing from Iran/Palestine/Syria to Libya. The chief purpose of the switching was to exculpate Syria, a vital ally of the Americans in the 1991 Gulf war. Soon after the war, Green became HM ambassador in Syria.

In 1994, as part of the Tory government's initiative to draft top civil servants into industry, Sir Andrew joined the board of Vickers Military Systems, which made tanks for Saudi Arabia; and, just to complete the picture, in 1996 he became HM ambassador in Saudi Arabia. Only slightly embarrassed, he left the Vickers board for fear of conflict of interest. His period of office there did not establish him as the most popular ambassador in history, and his valedictory telegram when he left his post caused some consternation for its respectful remarks about the Saudi government and its attitude to women.

Court Circular

THE QUEEN has finally reconciled herself to the fact that Charles and Camilla will eventually marry.

Arriving at Balmoral for her summer break with the success of the golden jubilee behind her, Brenda surprised senior courtiers over lunch by reflecting that she has changed far more than hacks and biographers give her credit for. Much of that change has been forced on her by events (Diana, Fergie, Sophie, etc); but a lot more has come courtesy of her former treasurer, Sir Michael Peat (*Eyes passim*), who recently left Brenda to become Charles's private secretary.

Peat's influence over Brenda, increasingly without close friends and mourning the deaths of her mother and sister, has increased in jubilee year. At his farewell audience Peat was thanked generously for all his work and agreed to continue to play a big part in his own grand plan of making this a "golden decade" running up to the diamond jubilee of 2012.

The payback is Brenda's agreement to his ongoing project on behalf of his new boss to bring Camilla to public acceptance. This will lead inevitably to a wedding as Peat insists the relationship must eventually be "formalised". Briefings prepared for Brenda by the Church of England, the palace and Downing Street all make clear that the new archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, will not rock the boat.

Williams, contrary to recent press reports, does not believe that Charles and Camilla qualify for a church wedding – because the C of E's new, more relaxed guidelines on the remarriage of divorcees do not yet extend to adulterers. But he would not speak out against a civil ceremony followed by a church blessing, or a wedding in Scotland – the route taken by Princess Anne. Such a wedding would also give Peat another high point for the "golden decade" to go with the Queen's 80th birthday in 2006 and her diamond wedding in 2007.

Meanwhile at Balmoral the Queen has been reflecting on two further sad events. The death of the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of England and friend – and the fact that she received, er, a tray from the Cabinet as a jubilee gift, rather than a (modest) replacement royal yacht. Brenda had got her hopes up after her eagle eye spotted discussions of such a generous prezzie in Cabinet minutes. Alas, it was never mentioned again.

'Flunkey'

Warballs

"Improved prospects for independent education in Cornwall were outlined by headmaster Richard White at the annual speech and sports day of Polwhele House School, Truro. 'During this academic year, and partly because of 11 September, we have noticed a marked increase in the number of people with young families who want to relocate to Cornwall and send their children to independent schools,' he said."

— *The West Briton.*

"Coming from a small firm in Ayrshire to be president of the Law Society of Scotland was daunting and there were times when I wondered what I had done. Stronger than my doubts, however, was my continuing belief that anyone, whether a sole practitioner, a partner in one of our largest firms or an in-house solicitor, has common values which are core to being a lawyer. Nothing confirmed that belief more than the outrage of the terrorist attacks of 11 September."

— Martin McAllister, *Journal of the Law Society of Scotland.*

"Just as the political and spiritual landscape of the world was forever altered last September, so too has every golfer we know reassessed the importance of the sport in his or her life. And most we've spoken with say that they've come to appreciate the game even more now than before our universe was rocked on that late-summer morning."

— *Golfing Las Vegas: The Complete Guidebook to Golfing Las Vegas 2002.*

"Alex undoubtedly adds a sprinkling of glamour to the *Big Brother* house as the resident model with the drop dead gorgeous looks. His big break came when he was chosen by Armani for their campaign last autumn, but the tragedy of 11 September meant his face went largely unnoticed."

— Tragic news indeed, from *OK!* magazine.

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

IT isn't just the railways that are crumbling thanks to half-witted management and the nightmare logic of post-privatisation regulations. When it comes to efficient, high-speed internet access – broadband – the UK is like one of those countries that still use steam trains.

The attitude of BT and Oftel even suggests they would rather broadband simply went away: why else do costly market research and throw away the results?

One of the cheapest ways for home users and small businesses to get fast on-line access is to use an Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL), a clever bit of jiggery-pokery that uses the telephone wires to transmit data 10 times faster than the neolithic dial-up modems most of us rely on. ADSL is one answer to the frustrations of getting online and means you can use the internet effectively for business rather than titillation (although it helps for this too).

Because Britain is a small island nation it should be simple to blanket it with broadband. But it isn't. Only 2 percent of Britons are wired up, ranking us 22nd in the world behind economic giants like, er, Belgium and Sweden.

Part of the fault lies with BT, specifically BT Wholesale. BT claims that 66 percent of people are connected to an ADSL-enabled exchange; while this may be true, all over the country there are reports of people logging into websites to be told they can get ADSL only to find they can't.

For a third of the country, meanwhile, there is little hope of getting online at all. BT's website allows people in remote areas to pre-register an interest in ADSL. The trouble is, as BT Wholesale admits, it is not allowed, by Oftel, to use this data by, for example, passing it on to companies who would provide internet access.

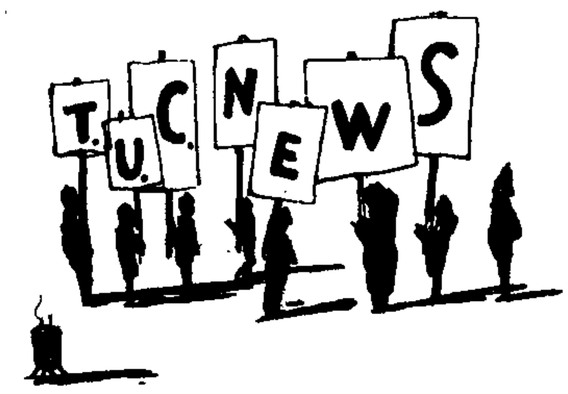
Incredibly this censorship – put in place during deregulation of telecoms in the 1980s – even extends to BT's own internet company, Openworld. Thus we have the ludicrous situation where one arm of a company is allowed to do market research that would benefit another arm… but is not allowed to pass the information on. The pre-registration scheme looks more like a PR stunt.

In fact there is little sign BT is trying to sell ADSL. It claims that 200 to 400 customers are needed to make an ADSL exchange viable; in fact the number is probably closer to 50. Converting a small exchange to ADSL costs about as much as a family car.

What is so odd is that there are millions of people who would pay for broadband if only they could get it. One reason could be that BT still profits from making businesses pay through the nose for ancient technologies, like ISDN, that are slower and more expensive than ADSL.

The only hope seems to be to rely on the cable firms, which are doing a brisk job of filling in BT's gaps. In Germany and Canada, where the major telephone companies have been given a freer hand to develop ADSL networks, broadband has blossomed. It is arguably less "fair", but at least the computers, like Mussolini's trains, run on time.

'Boffin'



ALTHOUGH Roger "currant bun" Lyons, joint general-secretary of Amicus, was quick to declare the defeat of his erstwhile colleague Ken "two jobs" Jackson by leftie Derek Simpson as "fucking brilliant" (*Eye* 1059), his own future looks increasingly precarious. The trade union certification officer for Northern Ireland has found him guilty of breaking his own union rules on three counts.

This latest run-in with the rule book began in April 1998 when, as general-secretary of the MSF union, he received a letter from Mr R. McNulty, chairman of Shorts Brothers, Belfast, telling him that Shorts was "no longer prepared to work with the present MSF (staff) interface" [*sic*].

This "interface" was actually Frank Cammock and Kevin Doherty, hard-working MSF shop stewards who were too active for management's liking. Instead of telling McNulty to get lost, Lyons wrote to MSF members at Shorts telling them he had "clear evidence that a politically motivated campaign was underway among MSF members exhorting them to leave the union". The implication was that Cammock and Doherty were part of a plot to encourage MSF members to join the rival TGWU.

Cammock and Doherty were summoned by senior MSF officials who told them Lyons had given his authorisation for their immediate suspension "from all union offices that you hold, including those as workplace representative". MSF rules do not give Lyons any authority to suspend, nor do they allow him to authorise another officer to suspend.

In December 1999 the problems at Shorts were raised at the MSF's national executive committee, which approved the suspensions of Cammock and Doherty retrospectively, even though union rules only give the NEC power to suspend over misappropriation of union funds or dissemination of racist propaganda.

Cammock and Doherty were not told the allegations against them nor shown any evidence. Both denied having anything to do with encouraging MSF members to leave the union. In January 2000 they appealed against their suspensions. More than two years later they are still waiting for a hearing – even though union rules say appeals must be heard within two months. The men complained to the certification officer – an ombudsman for trade unions – who has pulled no punches condemning Lyons and his cronies.

The watchdog found Lyons had broken his own union rules on three counts, while the NEC, whose job is to ensure rules are observed, breached them on four counts. The MSF was ordered to reinstate Cammock and Doherty to their union posts immediately. Sadly, Shorts made both men redundant earlier this year.

'Blackleg'

"For my last request I'd like you to use the British Army's SA80 rifle"

EYE TV

Any Time Now (BBC1)

ALTHOUGH playwrights show no sign of learning this, it's always wise to check that your title doesn't give critics an easy shot. Yet, year after year, the poor loves still put out shows called *Unforgettable* or *Perfect* or *The Best Thing Yet* and are then surprised when the intro of every television review lands the same blow.

The titular difficulties of the BBC1 drama **Any Time Now** are rather more subtle. Apparently planned as a major drama series of the kind which turns up on Sunday nights in spring or autumn at 9pm, it was delayed and now screens in deep summer in a 10.35pm slot. You can imagine the conversations between the producers and the commissioners. "When's *Any Time Now* going out?" / "Oh, any time now." / "And it will be getting a 9pm slot?" /

"Weee-llll, it could be any time now."

Both television scheduling and air traffic control work obsessively around the idea of "slots" preserved for a certain property. But a plane which misses its slot may take off later and still land in the sunshine. That's rare for a television programme. Miss your slot and you'll start feeling like one of those Ryanair flights where the passengers give up hope of taking off at all.

ITV1 is currently sitting on several high-profile dramas which for various reasons – too highbrow, too political, too much reference to terrorism or plane crashes – are currently going nowhere. And don't we suspect that last week's gritty BBC2 drama *Little Angels* about heroin addiction was originally intended for a more prestigious autumn or spring screening? Isn't it possible that this week's BBC1 drama *Stretford Wives* was once meant to go out in the glare of publicity rather than of sunshine?

So, viewed now, late on summer Thursday nights when most of the public has left the country, is there anything which tells us what the schedulers believe *Any Time Now* to have done wrong? Well, what we see is a drama about smart Irish thirtysomethings trying to make sense of their personal and professional lives. In other words, it's *O'Cold Feet* or *Hearts and Bones* with half a pound of blarney on the side.

Nora, Stevie and Kate are three young Dublin women making their way in a culture where the pub is giving way to the wine bar and European subsidies and the Celtic Tiger economy are taking over from the Catholic Church as the drivers of daily life. You'd guess that the pitch to the commissioners was "*Cold Feet* crossed with *Ballykissangel*". Always wary of admitting such parentage, though, the continuity announcer prefaced episode two with a cry of "Bridget Jones, eat your heart out!"

Lack of originality, however, need not be an obstacle to progress in the schedules and may even be an advantage. *Hearts and Bones*, for example, was a *Cold Feet* clone and the last few major autumn and spring launches were largely a matter of playing "spot the difference" from the hit shows of the previous year.

Any Time Now even has some smart lines and original plot-twists – such as a TV weatherman expiring during the forecast – and so you are reluctantly forced to conclude that its demotion results from a reason which tells you something terrible about mainstream television. Apart from Susan Lynch, a fairly familiar face, the cast includes no other actors who have previously been seen in peak-time TV dramas. In other words, the producers are being punished for failing to cast that wee Colleen from *Ballykissangel* or persuading Pauline Quirke to show off her brogue.

Given the poor ratings of recent peak-time series starring such supposed ratings-grabbers as Quirke and Ricky Tomlinson, however, it might be worth executives questioning their casting policies and the scheduling decisions which follow from them. But when are they likely to change their mind on that one? Not any time now.

'Square Eyes'

GOING LIVE

THE BBC's News 24 service hit new depths while covering the tragic events in Soham last week.

On 18 August reporter Jane Hughes was in the town waiting for a statement from police when she was asked by the studio anchor what she could tell us. "Well we're expecting the statement in about 10 minutes' time. We don't know the details yet and we can't really say anything about it until it happens."

Rather than leave it there, the channel broadcast 10 minutes of pointless filling, including a nauseating plug for BBC News 24 itself. "At the Red Lion pub, they've had News 24 on their screens for most of the time." Pass the sickbag.

ARDENT and Carlton, a combination by no means guaranteed to deliver high quality programming, are currently promoting a collection of five *Crown and Country* videos to cash in on the jubilee. The first three are "written, narrated and produced by Edward Windsor", while the final two are "written, narrated and produced by Edward Wessex".

There must surely be some doubt that the American market in particular will realise that the same "insider" is responsible for the entire series. If only he weren't so reluctant to exploit his royal status, the tapes could of course be billed as "written, narrated and produced by Prince Edward". Then again, they could always be credited to whichever poor sod at Ardent actually did the work.

PRODUCERS on Channel 4's beleaguered breakfast show *RI:SE* have been told to sign a pledge promising that certain swear words, including "god", will not be broadcast on the programme.

The blacklist cites 28 obscenities as inappropriate for early morning viewers, even though recent ratings suggest that *RI:SE* has very few of those.

The words are listed in order of severity, "as judged by a sample audience", and must rank as one of the programme's most amusing moments so far. "Jew" is deemed much more acceptable than "dickhead", while "paki" and "shag" find themselves on an equal footing. The top ten contains "cunt", "motherfucker", "wanker", "prick" and "arsehole", which could make life tough for producers wishing to identify the presenters.

MEDIA NEWS

SO THE broadcasting standards council (BSC), in the weedy guise of a "personal" rebuke from its director Paul Bolt, has at last criticised BBC output.

Even though Bolt was "speaking in a personal capacity" in a huge, widely quoted interview in the *Financial Times,* the BBC still swatted away his remarks about "humdrum" and "formulaic" programmes with the briefest statement. Once again the BBC "had no comment" – continuing its arm's-length approach to the regulators championed by chairman Gavyn Davies.

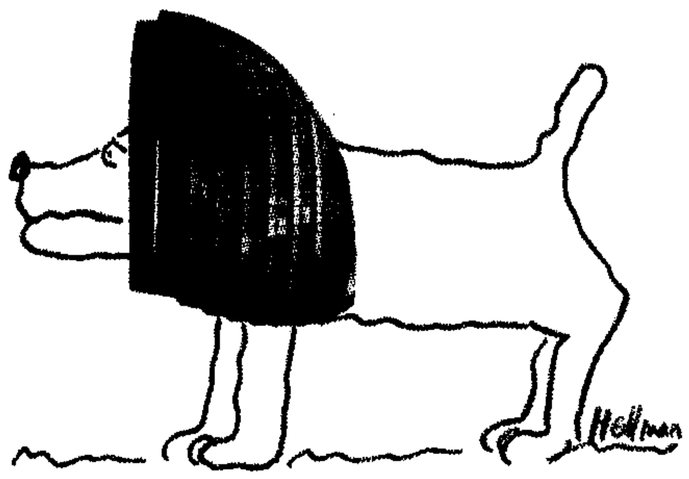
Bolt's attack did not appear on the BBC's internal briefing which is supposed to explain "what the BBC is saying to the media"; and nor was it off the mark. On the day Bolt shot his bolt, viewers were promised a new series called *Cheer for Charlie* (Dimmock) and a potentially sick-making current affairs event: "Alan Titchmarsh and the Ground Force go to New York for the September 11th anniversary."

WHAT did ITV do immediately after last week's *Tonight With Trevor McDonald*, which featured interviews with the distraught parents of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman?

Ever-sensitive, it cut to a promo (stark black screen, serious white writing) for a programme about "every parent's worst nightmare": driving lessons.

101 Uses for a City Hall

Pet Injury Protector



IT'S summertime, just about, but this year the traditional snatched photos of topless sunbathing celebs aren't available in sufficient numbers to fill the red-tops. David Sullivan's *Sunday Sport*'s was so desperate it even ran photos of Tara Palmer-Tomkinson with her bikini off (again), as a major world exclusive.

Happily, however, Sullivan's mates in television are delivering the sort of content the paparazzi are failing to find. The *Sport* has gratefully endorsed Channel 4's new schedules ("Phwoar! C4 pushes back the sexual boundaries") and is even more excited about Greg Dyke's BBC digital channels: "BBC Goes Shag Happy… Sunday Sport page 3 babes Alicia Douvall and Lindsay Dawn Mackenzie met for the BBC Choice show *Diners* and within minutes sparks were flying."

The BBC seems to have simply supplied the two shaggers with huge quantities of alcohol, stuck microphones on them and started taping. Since Douvall has already sold 10 kiss and tells describing the sexual proclivities of showobiz stars and footballers including Dwight Yorke, Mick Hucknall and Shaggy (*sic*), and Mackenzie's sex-life has also been energetic and very public, it's hardly surprising that a competitive element soon enters their debate. Discussing the finer points of male anatomy, Mackenzie claims that Duvall is only interested in black men.

"I like white men too," Alicia protests.

"No you don't! You like black willy."

"I like *all* willy," Alicia corrects her. "I used to only like people with dark hair, then I went for Mick who has ginger hair. He has sex appeal and aura. That's what black people have. Gorgeous eyes and eyelashes, and muscly bodies. They are better hung and have no fat. It's a known fact."

And so on, all transmitted by the corporation once run by Lord Reith. When Greg Dyke complained that the BBC was "hideously white", did he realise his digital vision would soon enable viewers to ponder "known facts" about black men's penises?

THOSE hoping for a sign that the new generation of business leaders is any better than the last will have been disappointed by the testimony Lachlan Murdoch gave last week to the Australian federal court investigation into the collapse of the One.Tel phone company.

The Digger's eldest was non-executive director of One.Tel when it fell to the liquidators in May last year. He told the inquiry in Sydney he had persuaded his dad to pump more than £100m into this funky black hole (*surely "cutting edge telecommunications opportunity?" Ed.*) because James Packer, son of Kerry, had sold the idea to him over a three-hour dinner in January 1999 saying that if the market knew News Corp was in, the share price would rocket.

Packer was already in because he was impressed by One.Tel co-founder, the aptly named Jodee Rich; and within weeks Lachie was in too. By making zillions from the dot.com boom without much effort, they could show both their dads how clever they were.

Lachlan admitted to the court that even though Jodee was known to have ballsed up one new technology venture a couple of years before, he didn't think to ask Packer much about Rich's business skills because he and Jodee had been at school together.

While his performance dripped sickly Ivy League charm (Princeton), young Lachie's answers in court were as lame as Packer's had been in May. Both insisted they had been "profoundly misled" by One.Tel's executive directors and both were vague on detail. When asked why Jodee had been given a £2m "over-achievement bonus" (listed on the books as "deferred expenditure") only a few months before the collapse, Murdoch jr said he had only a "vague recollection" of the details. His other angle was to imply that the whole £400m loss was such small beer to News Corp he didn't really take much notice.

So, smooth as ever… but hardly reassuring for nervous shareholders worried about the succession at News Corp. The only sign of things to come in the entire charade was young Murdoch's peculiar tendency to answer questions with "correct" instead of "yes" and "incorrect" instead of no. Is he after Anne Robinson's job at the *The Weakest Link*? The hearing resumes in October.

DUMB BRITAIN

Beacon Radio, Wolverhampton

DJ Mark: For £10, what is the nationality of the Pope?

Ruth from Rowley Regis: I think I know that one. Is it Jewish?

The Weakest Link, BBC1/2

Anne Robinson: In traffic, what "J" is where two roads meet?

Contestant: Jool carriageway.

Robinson: In sport, the name of which famous racehorse was the word "murder" spelt backwards?

Drag queen: Shergar.

RI:SE, Channel 4

Quizmaster: Where is the Sea Of Tranquility?

Contestant: Ibiza.

CARING executives at Granada Media Group continue to pare down their regional operations to cut costs in the wake of the ITV Digital disaster.

One area they identified was the programme support unit at Anglia Television where it was announced that one of the unit's three writers, Colin Bevan, would be made redundant.

Bevan has been working for Anglia since the late 70s and is a registered disabled deaf person. He felt sure he'd been targeted because of his disability and lodged a formal appeal against the decision. With the prospect of an embarrassing tribunal looming, Granada made the other two writers redundant too. Sorted!

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Klimt Eastwood

AD NAUSEAM

WITH September nearly upon us, the big retail chains are thinking Christmas; for most pick up a large chunk of their revenues in the forthcoming quarter.

As the lavish ad campaigns are unveiled, few stores need a pick-me-up more than Woolworths, with miserable sales last year and the axe looming for chairman Gerald Corbett (of Railtrack fame). Earlier this year Woolworths looked likely to merge with Bhs – until Bhs's gilded head honcho Philip Green had a look round his local branch and proclaimed that he'd "never seen a bigger pile of shit".

So a lot depends on the new campaign from agency Bates, which features comedian Paul Kaye playing a madcap parent joshing with his kids in Woolies. The ad broke the weekend before last. Unfortunately that very same day Kaye appeared in the *Guardian* and said: "I've just done an ad for Woolies. What a cunt. I'll have to hide from the telly for six months."

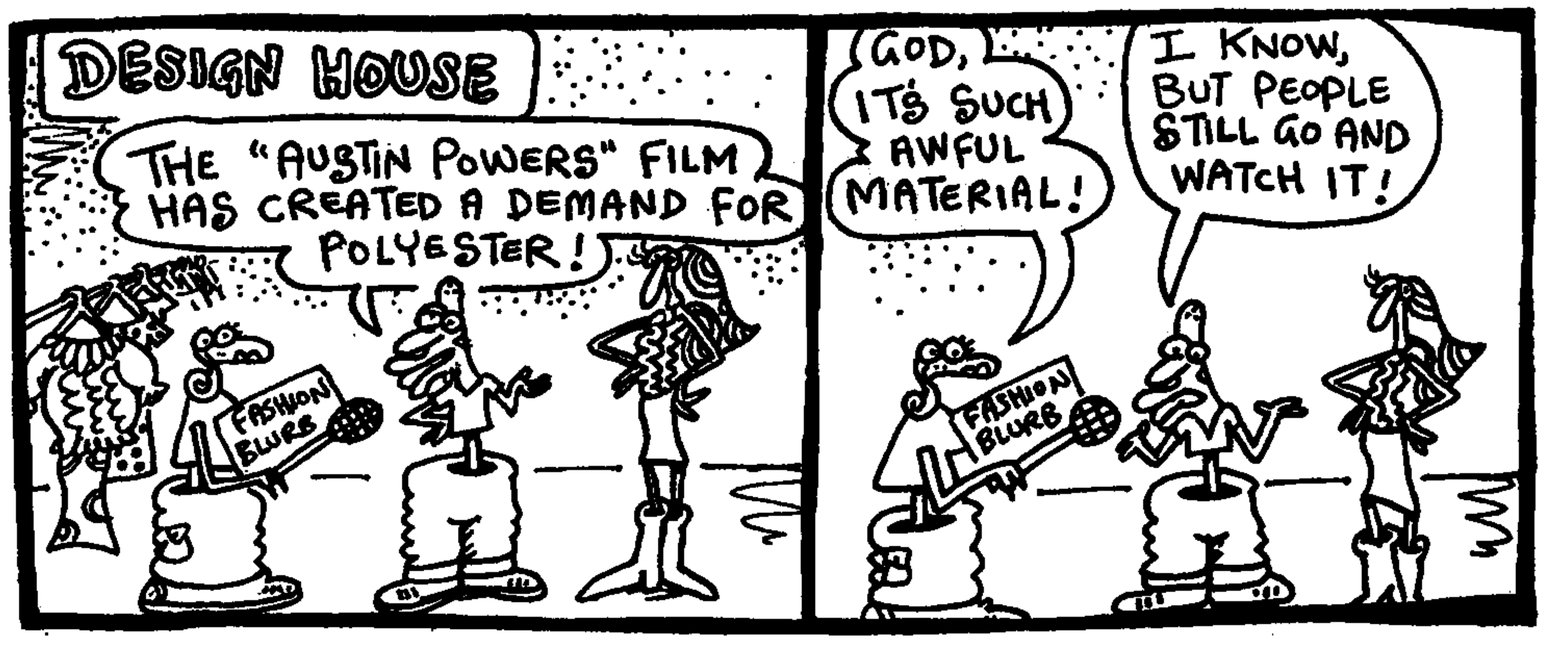
Having spent £20m on the new campaign, Woolworths marketeers will be choking on their lattes every time the tagline "Well worth it" appears.

ADVERTISING has always been a nasty business but a recent ad for Airbus alongside the runway at the Farnborough Airshow was beyond the pale.

It said "A340. 4 engines 4 long-haul" implying that if you flew in one of Boeing's twin-engined 777s you might not make it. Presumably Airbus is gearing up for something similarly hard-hitting to mark the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on America.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


DESIGN HOUSE
THE "AUSTIN POWERS" FILM HAS CREATED A DEMAND FOR POLYESTER!
FASHION BLURB
GOD, IT'S SUCH AWFUL MATERIAL!
I KNOW, BUT PEOPLE STILL GO AND WATCH IT!
FASHION BLURB

DOING THE ROUNDS

WHY have Drs Bob Baker and Pete Hambly been sacked as columnists for the *BMA News*? On 4 May they lampooned the General Medical Council for its amateurish and potentially corrupt approach to expense payments. The story, originally broken by *Hospital Doctor*, was that the charities commission had spotted that no GMC officer was ever required to provide receipts when claiming expenses. This fairly basic omission is all the more lamentable given that the GMC has been preparing to become a charity for some years.

The commission discovered that past president Sir Donald Irvine was paid £170,000 a year plus free use of a central London flat during his term of office. The payment was described as an "honorarium", which for the rest of the world means a few quid for the inconvenience of offering a service. Sir Donald's payments in and out of kind totalled about £1m since 1995, and although there is no hint of impropriety, the slapdash approach to reimbursement seems at odds with the GMC's relaunch as the beacon for medical accountability.

Hard working GMC council members told *Hospital Doctor* of minor expenses scams – going second class and claiming for first; staying cheaply in a Royal College and charging for a swanky hotel – but the new regime under Sir Graeme Catto has allegedly cleared up its act. Baker and Hambly decided to test the water with a parody letter from a "Sir Graham" to the charity commission inquiring about the interpretation of the word "honorarium".

The GMC at present is answerable only to the crown, via the privy council, and not parliament. The British Medical Association needs to keep the GMC in check, and vice versa, to avoid the impression that the medical establishment is an old boys' network that closes ranks in response to criticism. However, when Baker and Hambly's piece was published, Hambly received an extraordinary letter from the *BMA News*' review's editor Julie Coulson.

"We haven't received a formal complaint, but the GMC item, particularly the thinly-veiled reference to Graeme Catto, has caused some problems. The editor-in-chief, BMA chairman Ian Bogle, found the item offensive, and has expressed the view that [your] column isn't appropriate for a BMA publication. He would be happy if it were discontinued. A decision about the future of the column has been left to me. While of course I must take heed of and respect the views of the editor-in-chief, I wouldn't go as far as axing it. I do, however, accept Dr Bogle's assertion that sometimes [it] is too near the knuckle for a BMA publication, and that we have to be more careful in future when choosing our targets and lampooning individuals. The GMC expenses issue certainly has to be off limits from now on."

Coulson neglected to mention that she is married to her "editor in chief" and BMA Council chairman, Ian Bogle. Her email makes it clear Bogle wanted them sacked back in May and that the GMC expenses cock-up could not be mentioned again. Coulson initially over-ruled her husband, but the pair *were* sacked last month. They then discovered from a source in the GMC who is unwilling to be named, that Bogle allegedly rang Graeme Catto to apologise for the GMC joke and claiming to have "sacked the writers responsible". Baker went public with his outrage in the *Independent* at the end of last month, prompting an interesting response from Bogle.

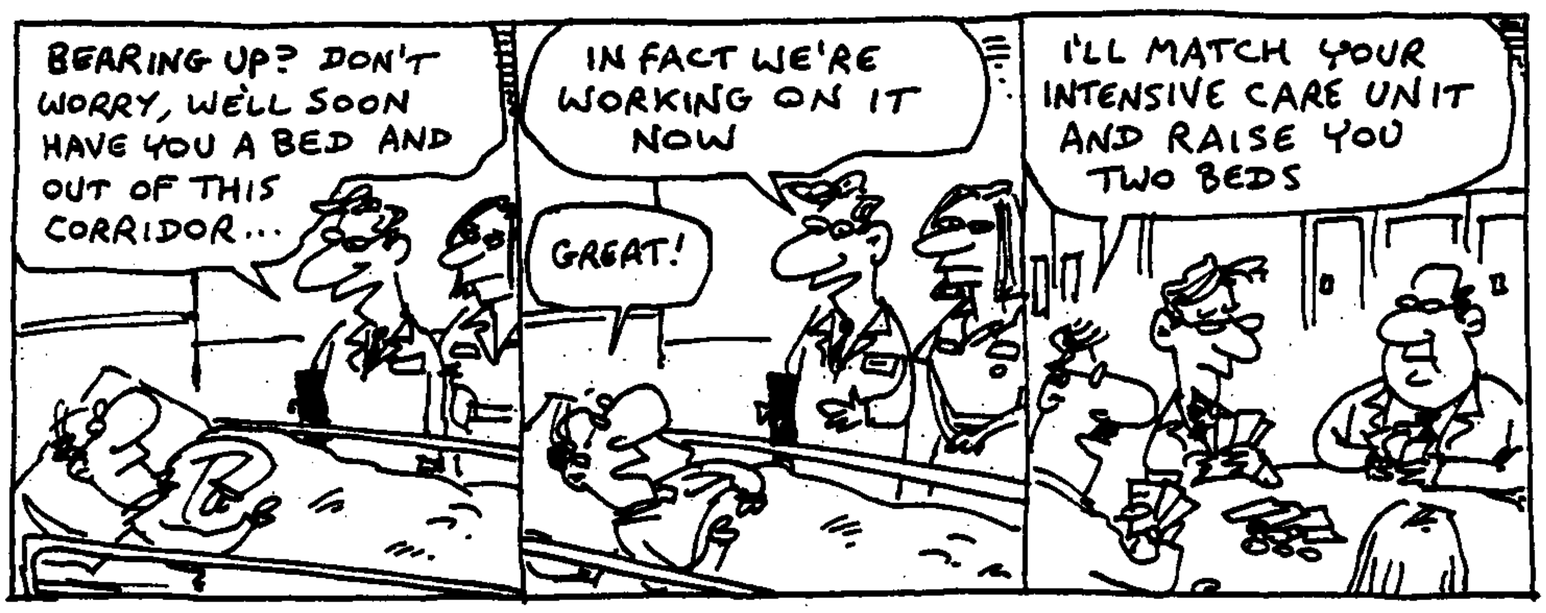
"Sir: I write to refute completely the suggestion in Dr Bob Baker's article that the British Medical Association or its magazine would seek to suppress legitimate and reasoned criticism of either itself or other professional bodies... Dr Baker is clearly aggrieved that their regular column has been discontinued. This was a decision made by senior editorial staff for sound editorial reasons... It is true that recent items referring to the GMC and its office holders caused concern but Dr Baker flatters himself if he believes the column in question was the subject of 'meetings at the highest level'. No such meetings took place."

Bogle fails to mention that he is the most senior editorial staff member and that according to his wife, he wanted the pair sacked. And why did Coulson say that GMC expenses were off limits when Bogle "completely refutes" the notion of suppression of criticism of the GMC? As for the alleged phone call from Bogle to Catto, the saddest part is that the source in the GMC is too frightened to go public – a sure sign that the post-Bristol medical mafia has yet to change.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY


BEARING UP? DON'T WORRY, WE'LL SOON HAVE YOU A BED AND OUT OF THIS CORRIDOR...
IN FACT WE'RE WORKING ON IT NOW
GREAT!
I'LL MATCH YOUR INTENSIVE CARE UNIT AND RAISE YOU TWO BEDS

SIGNAL FAILURES

Corporate utopia

THE simple task of replacing old track, signals and electric cables on the west-coast mainline has turned into a disaster costing as much as BSE and foot-and-mouth disease together. But there's no hint of a public inquiry or audit office intervention.

The project's cost has risen from £2bn to about £13bn, excluding some of the original aims and extra compensation for Virgin. (For comparison: Baroness Hayman said BSE would cost £4.4bn by April 2001; the audit office says FMD cost £8bn.) The fiasco proves that public-private partnerships to modernise rail infrastructure don't work (just when tube PPPs are being forced through), and that the privatised railway is unsustainable. So the less said about it the better for "new" Labour.

Accordingly there's no investigation of the whole railway's rising costs, which the strategic rail authority (SRA) started to bemoan after the *Eye*'s last article on inefficiency (1056). The SRA identified some factors like Railtrack but said nothing of its own cost-control problems, which start at home. Last summer chief executive Mike Grant's contract was renewed prematurely although the incoming SRA chairman would want a new chief executive. In December Grant left with a £280,000 payoff.

The SRA manages costs like a sweetshop owner who gives children the shop keys. Having fined South West Trains £24m for pisspoor performance over two years, the SRA handed it £29m for "passenger benefits" SWT is meant to provide anyway. This month the SRA announced £10m to help Midland Mainline improve performance to contracted levels. Anglia Railways is getting £27m extra to support services at current levels. The deals include lollipops like extra Sunday trains for PR purposes but are essentially top-ups.

Appalling Arriva Trains will get whatever cash it needs (*Eyes passim*), while ScotRail, Wessex Trains, Wales & Borders, First North Western, Central Trains and Wagn get extra wads. All belong to huge transport groups contractually obliged to sustain any losses *and* maintain proper services. Their franchise subsidies are falling too fast, because they volunteered for silly subsidies in the mid-90s to undercut rivals. But it turns out these groups are in corporate utopia, where foolishness is rewarded and maintaining a group's share price is a legitimate use of public funds.

National Express Group, for example, walked into ScotRail with eyes open. ScotRail was expected to lose £70m over two years to April 2004. NEG made £157m profit last year, but now the SRA has promised ScotRail £70m on top of its planned subsidy. When big handouts for NEG's Central (£45m), Midland Mainline, Wagn, Wessex and Wales franchises are added, it's obvious taxpayers are getting NEG off the hook. Chief exec Phil White can look forward to another bonus to wash down the £1.1m he earned last year.

Train operators are also getting some of the west-coast renewal cash, where compensation for disruption makes up nearly half the costs of some jobs. Much of that cash is going to Virgin – the company that signed the renewal deal with Railtrack and stands to benefit most from it. Virgin is being doubly compensated, having volunteered a business plan based on wildly optimistic calculations (*Eyes passim*) and a pretence that Railtrack was competent. That plan might have brought Richard Branson's empire to its knees had the SRA (headed by ex-Virgin Trains high-flier Richard Bowker) not happily agreed to "restructure" both Virgin franchises behind closed doors. That's SRA-speak for giving Virgin huge wads (up to £465m) instead of Virgin paying the SRA as originally agreed.

Meanwhile, the same SRA is hinting at cuts or zero investment in some areas because there aren't enough sweeties for everyone as well as Phil White and chums. More fares rises are on the cards, to help cover rising costs and to cut overcrowding by forcing poor people off the trains. How much better that is for our government – committed to social inclusion and cutting greenhouse gases – than an efficient nationalised railway for which ministers are accountable.

'Dr B. Ching'

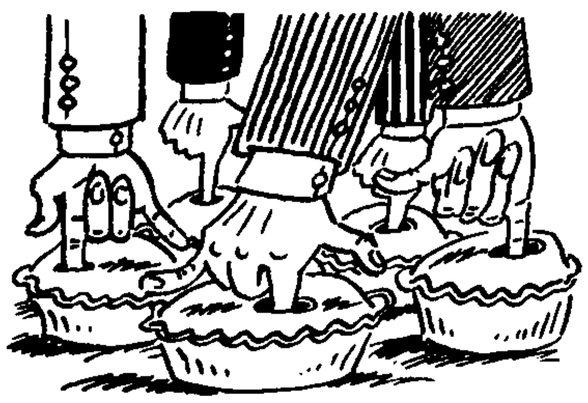
overheard complaining to another. His Virgin train from London was 20 minutes late, he grumbled, and, to make matters worse, St Richard Branson was on board

Daily Telegraph

07:40
Southampton Central to London Waterloo
due 09:31
ALTERATION
This train has been reinstated.
This is due to a fault on the train.

South West Trains website

ROTTEN BOROUGHS



BARKING MAD

THERE'S tension between backbench councillors and senior officers in the normally low profile Labour borough of Barking and Dagenham.

Temperatures rose last month after councillors on a scrutiny panel rejected a recommendation by the council's executive (cabinet) that chief officers should get a 9 percent pay rise, plus inflation.

This would have brought chief executive Graham Farrant, according to our sources, up to £136,000. Barking council refuses to confirm this, insisting that the pay of officials paid from public funds is "confidential". Ignoring complaints from Farrant that chief officers had been waiting since spring for their rise, the scrutiny panel was perhaps influenced by the fact that the previous week most of the council's more lowly employees had been on strike for a day, having rejected a 3 percent pay offer, and that since Farrant became chief executive two years ago the number of chief officers has risen from 30 to 41.

Farrant and colleague John Tatam, Barking's head of policy, missed the excitement of the council workers' strike, however, as they were off on important business at the time – delivering a 90-minute lecture at the "third international conference on theory and practice in performance management" in Boston, Massachusetts, on the subject of "adapting the balanced scorecard as a comprehensive performance management system". Although this talk was delivered on the Wednesday morning, the pair selflessly stayed on in Boston until the Sunday to take advantage of cheaper airfares — a snip to the taxpayer at £5,500, club class.

● **NINE PERCENT rises for senior officers already on very good money? That would be peanuts to Darryl "Bumptious" Stephenson, chief executive of East Riding of Yorkshire council (Eryc), the man who on 1 April received a 34.5 percent pay rise, bringing his salary up to £140,000 a year (*Eyes passim*). This gross handout was recommended in a report by accountant PriceWaterhouseCoopers, which had been called in to review senior officers' salaries after Eryc's £80,000-a-year director of education retired. To attract suitable outside candidates, PWC said, the education job should be advertised at £100,000 a year. But that was almost as much as the chief executive was getting, so Darren of course had to have his differential restored. Now the council has at last appointed its education supremo, after processing 100 applications, interviewing scores of candidates and spending thousands on headhunters' fees. The new "director of lifelong learning" is one Jon Mager, formerly £60,000 "head of inclusion and resources" at, er, East Riding of Yorkshire council.**

TAKING A LIBERATA

MORE news from the bullshit industry, where local government "service provider" CSL (*Eyes passim*) has jumped on the name change bandwagon. It will in future be known as "Liberata".

In the sarf London borough of Southwark, where CSL administers housing benefit and council tax, locals are for some reason not enthused. CSL's corporate slogan, "People are our culture", jars somewhat given how often the local government ombudsman upholds complaints from tenants facing the threat of eviction because CSL has failed to process their housing benefit applications quickly enough.

Council taxpayers also understand the full meaning of CSL's slogan. In January 2001, George Hilleard, who had learning difficulties, hanged himself after receiving a summons threatening him with prison for unpaid council tax of £235.10 (*Eye* 1028). Earlier this year the local government ombudsman, who took the case up at the behest of Hilleard's family, found CSL had ignored two applications submitted by him for council tax benefit. As a result of CSL's blunder, Southwark was ordered to pay undisclosed damages to the family and £1,000 to a charity.

Explaining CSL's name change, a spokesman said the new identity "gives a strong, consistent image", which will "liberate clients from non-core business processes". Indeed.

MISSING LINCS

GOOD to see that Lincolnshire county council — dead in the water because of the recalcitrance of its discredited leader Jim Speechley who refuses to resign (see *Eyes passim*) — is taking on board council taxpayers' demands for a fresh start and a more open, accountable style.

The code of local government conduct now requires councillors to declare financial and business interests and for the register to be open to public inspection. The logical extension of that, now that most councils have websites, is to post the register on the web. But it is not a legal requirement.

When Lincolnshire officers canvassed councillors about doing so, only 25 out of 77 agreed and the idea may now be scrapped. The only way to check the register of interests is to turn up in person, in office hours, at the council offices in Lincoln. Meanwhile in Kent, councillors have also voted against publishing its register on its website, saying it would pose "unnecessary risks" to councillors. Risks of being open to scrutiny by the people who foot the bill for councillors' decisions? Perish the thought!

SHRED OF EVIDENCE

FOLLOWING the success of former internal auditor Andy Sutton's public interest disclosure case against Flintshire county council (*Eye* 1060), the council's audit committee has pledged to be more open. Committee chairman Nigel Steele-Mortimer, who is not part of the ruling Labour group, has promised to allow the press and public into future meetings. Shock!

The announcement came in response to questions about Siân Griffiths, the council officer (*Eyes passim*) who made £48,000 in overtime in two years filtering council documents requested by the Waterhouse inquiry into child abuse in North Wales. The lack of documentation for this gross over-payment was one of the matters dealt with in Sutton's case.

The chairman of the tribunal declared inadmissible, because it was hearsay, evidence that Griffiths threw a wobbly when it was suggested she should not receive the full £48,000 overtime and threatened to release *all* available documents to Waterhouse. What did they reveal? We may never know because it is unlikely they still exist. Flintshire's officers do not like their files to be cluttered with inconvenient paperwork.

The audit committee could try to obtain answers from Griffiths' boss, legal director Andrew Loveridge, who refused to answer questions about Griffiths at the tribunal. But perhaps they should not hold their breath. After the success of Flintshire's former personnel director Jeanette Antrobus in walking away with a load of dosh after seriously cocking up (*Eye* 1060), it now emerges that Jonathan Bacon, the social services director who shared responsibility with Antrobus for an unlawful £21,000 payment, has also negotiated an £80,000 pay-off for himself and a £26,000 pa pension. The smart money is on Loveridge grabbing a similar parachute before he is asked any more awkward questions.

> **The reconstituted interdepartmental working group on transsexuals would do well to make sure it uses the transsexual community's expertise in ensuring that the sort of half-cocked legal mess that exists in the US is not created here.**
>
> *The Times*

● **GOOD news for council taxpayers in Leeds: the city council has at last agreed to sell its controversial shareholding in Leeds United, which has led to numerous complaints about conflicts of interest when considering planning applications by the club (*Eyes passim*). Bad news: the nine million shares, bought at 18p in 1997, are now worth just 7.5p each.**

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

I DIDN'T KNOW JEZ HAD DEVELOPED A PASSION FOR ARCHAEOLOGY...
THESE GROUNDS MUST BE RICH IN ANCIENT BOOTY
NOT QUITE, MAX JEZ MANAGED TO LOSE A PHILIPPE STARCK TEASPOON AT THE BARBEQUE THE OTHER WEEK — HE HASN'T SLEPT PROPERLY SINCE

MARLOW (O.G.)

REFRESHING to note it isn't only Labour councillors who are corrupt in Doncaster. Sentencing the town's former Conservative group leader John Dainty to 15 months for taking a £5,000 bribe to smooth a 1994 planning application, judge Christopher Metcalf condemned his conduct as something which "struck at the heart of democracy".

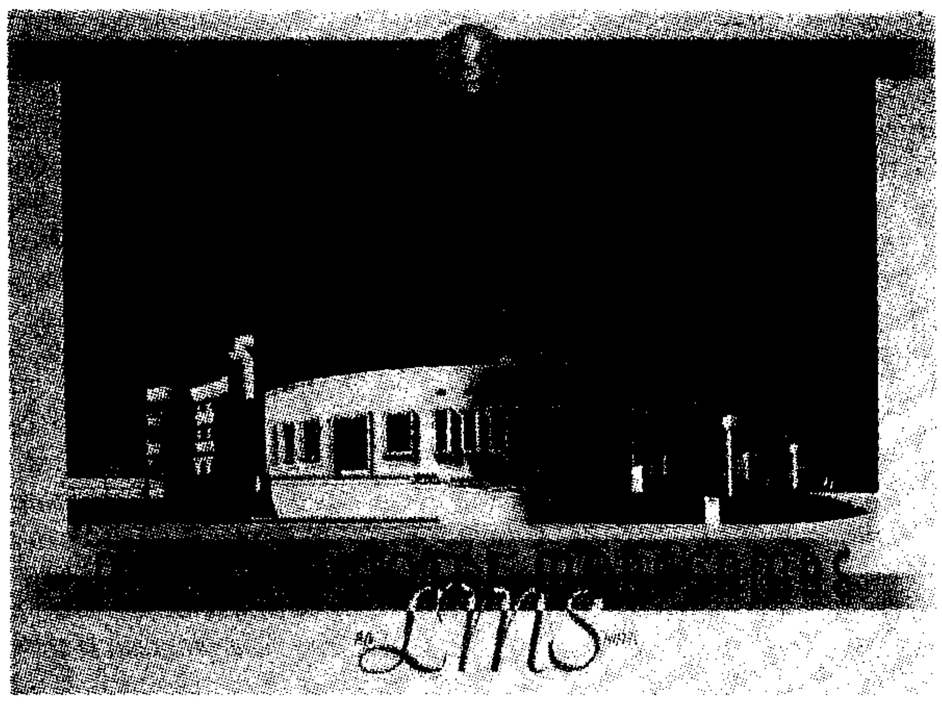
Food for thought for Donny's new broom chief executive David Marlow, whose management-speak ambitions for the town – "Transformational Goals" — have been inflicted as tedious screensavers on all council computers. Writing a character reference for Dainty's court defence, Marlow described the bent burgher as "a man of strong principles and integrity". A goal of the "own" rather than "transformational" variety, perhaps.

NOOKS and CORNERS

IT IS interesting how quick our elected representatives are to discard beautiful things or recommend destruction. On learning that a dodgy redevelopment scheme for the poor old Midland Hotel at Morecambe had collapsed, Councillor James Airey recommended that Lancaster city council "grasp the nettle" and consider demolition. The Morecambe MP Geraldine Smith announced: "We may have to think the unthinkable in terms of what we do with the building, but I don't think we've reached the demolition stage yet."

I should hope not. The famous Midland is a very special and stylish listed building, familiar to millions as a regular Art Deco setting for the *Poirot* television series. It's also virtually the only asset the depressed and depressing seaside town of Morecambe possesses.

Rebuilt in 1932-33 by the London Midland & Scottish Railway, the Midland Hotel was designed by Oliver Hill, a suave and versatile architect who could turn his hand to Classical or Tudor or – as here – the new Modern style. The building was intended as a symbol of hope to revitalise the image of the railway company and the faded Victorian seaside resort in the middle of the Depression. It did. Streamlined in form and sort of aerodynamic in plan with a curved frontage, Hill created a smart and appropriately slightly vulgar modernistic building of reinforced concrete. It was further remarkable for containing works of art by Eric Gill and murals by Eric Ravilious. It is almost the quintessential building of the Thirties.



Now, though, it's in a very sad state. Requisitioning during the second world war didn't help, and then a succession of hotel proprietors spoilt the building. One annoyance to them was the great Eric Gill stone relief of Odysseus Welcomed from the Sea by Nausica. This was exhibited at the 1979 Thirties exhibition at the Hayward but had never been properly reinstated although it was a "fixture" under the statutory listing of the Midland (Grade II*). It was lent again, to the Gill exhibition at the Barbican, and then went missing — though quite how six tons of stone could disappear was never satisfactorily explained. Eventually it was rediscovered, neatly packed, in 1998 round about the time that Leslie Whittingham, the then owner of the hotel, died while under police investigation.

Oliver Hill's modernistic masterpiece always had its admirers, however, and the Friends of the Midland Hotel, Morecambe, was founded to try to save it. The friends themselves were disconcerted when the building was acquired last year for £405,000 by two local businessmen, Jared Brook and Lincoln Fraser, who under the name of Kalber Leisure Ltd promised to restore it "to its former glory" provided they could build a large extension.

Kalber Leisure has now pulled out, claiming the costs of restoration were too high although the real reason is that another company run by the flash duo, Imperial Consolidated, has just crashed with possible debts of £200m. Just who owns the Midland now is not clear – all of which suggests that the Friends of the Midland and the Twentieth Century Society were right to regard the redevelopment with suspicion.

Anywhere else the Midland Hotel would be cherished and restored – like that other great example of Seaside Modernism, The De La Warr Pavilion at Bexhill. After all, it is bound to figure in the Art Deco exhibition being mounted at the V & A next year. But Morecambe is not Bexhill: nobody goes on holiday there any more, and the boarding houses are full of unfortunates on social security. Morecambe needs help, but intelligent help. Public money has already been spent on a seriously terrible statue of the late Eric Morecambe, on half-restoring the Winter Gardens and – stupidest of all – cutting back the railway to a miserable shed half a mile away leaving the fine old station opposite the hotel to be filled with yet more one-armed bandits. The money would have been better spent on restoring the Midland as some sort of flagship for regeneration. But what as? Perhaps Lancaster University could take it on – if it wasn't wasting money by trying to replace its 1960s campus with Design 'n' Build rubbish. What is required is some imagination from Lancaster city council.

Meanwhile the security fencing and window hoardings have been taken down, leaving not only the building but Eric Gill's murals and his mosaic ceiling above the circular staircase at grave risk from vandalism or theft. The council must do something to protect the Midland Hotel before it is too late. It's the only thing in Morecambe worth visiting and makes the town a lot more interesting than Torremolinos.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

Aren't you worried about overexposure, Sophie?
No-this has got to last us until September.
BRITARTISTS ARRESTED AT PISA AIRPORT
DRUNKEN YOBBOES
"A DISGRACE TO THEIR COUNTRY!"

I-SPY *Chester By-Pass*

Submitted by A. Thursfield. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

DOWN ON THE FARM

TO BE fair to the department for the elimination of farming and rural affairs (Defra), it is the only one of the Beloved Leader's ministries which is actually delivering on its chief policy: namely to wipe out what remains of British farming.

Furthermore, its ministers are clearly taking increasingly sadistic pleasure in the cat-and-mouse game they are playing to do it; headed by Britain's answer to Rosa Klebb, Margaret Beckett, aided by her loyal gang of bullies: Lord Whitty, Elliott Morley and Alun Michael.

One of their latest wheezes is to introduce a ban across large parts of the countryside on the ancient practice of muckspreading. For much of the year, farmers have been told, it will now be a criminal offence to fertilise their land with animal manure. Instead they must store it, at a cost amounting to tens of thousands of pounds per farm. Our ministers' excuse is that they have been ordered to impose the ban under the Eurpean Union's nitrates directive, supposedly designed to reduce nitrates in drinking water.

Originally Britain was reluctant to enforce the directive since it was based on two scientific fallacies which have long since been exploded. One of these held that nitrates were responsible for a very rare condition known as blue baby syndrome (last case in Britain was in 1950). The other was that they led to algal growth in estuaries (it has since been discovered that this is due to phosphates not nitrates).

Even though it has now been confirmed by a host of international scientists that nitrates in drinking water are good for human health, the EU became so cross Britain was not enforcing its directive that in 2000 it took the UK before the European court of justice. As a result Britain was fined £50m.

But it was hardly surprising the Maffia lost the case: it offered no defence. The reason was that, during the years when nitrification was still seen as a threat to health, the British government forced water companies to spend £3bn on denitrification plants. To admit this had all been a complete waste of money because nitrates were not harmful after all might have exposed them to massive compensation claims. Much better to roll over, say nothing, pay the £50m and impose the directive as zealously as possible on thousands of farmers, whose bill, according to the government's own figures, will top £50m every year.

Never mind, the average urban ignoramus will reply, didn't we read that under Gordon Brown's spending review farmers are to get another £500m a year in rural development funding? Surely that'll cover the £50m bill for those nitrate vulnerable zones and even leave a few bob over. How sadly this is to underrate the ingenuity of Rosa and her gang.

After the government announced this new source of funding for rural activities, Peter Troy, a leading light of the Federation of Small Businesses, put in an exhaustive series of queries to regional development agencies and other relevant bodies, asking how these new funds could be obtained and could they supply the necessary application forms. But there are no such forms. And there is no way the funds can be applied for. So far as the funding agencies are concerned, the funds do not exist. Yet another round to clever old Rosa.

'Muckspreader'

Letters

Poke in the Eye

Sir,

Where do you get off taking the piss out of Torygraph film critic Sandhu (Hackwatch, Eye 1060) solely, it seems, for being an intellectual and using words like "Bildungsroman"? Is this the same Eye that rails against dumbing down? You lead on "austerity measures" – but there is no mention of whether Sandhu is cheap or expensive, which in the context is surely more important than his comparative erudition.

And while we're at it, isn't there the slightest whiff of hypocrisy about your sneer at "Metro" (Ad Nauseam, Eye 1060) for accepting a McDonald's ad? When the Eye bitches about a company and takes an ad from it at the same time (eg, Cathay Pacific recently), it's "editorial independence". So why should it be a sell-out if "Metro" does the same?

Yours faithfully,
JOHN BOLEY,

Bangkok, Thailand.

That Scottish play

Sir,

Unfortunately your spoof Edinburgh Fringe version of Macbeth, by a nude Ukrainian troupe and set on the Moon in 3037, is not as original as you might wish. In his 1968 novel of overpopulation, Stand On Zanzibar, the late John Brunner listed the play MacBeth of Moonbase Zero by William Shakespeare and Hank Sodley as one of the many attractions of the then unimaginably distant year of 2010.

Regards,
JOSEPH NICHOLAS,

London N15.

Criminal neglect

Sir,

The In The Back report on the Criminal Records Bureau will have struck a chord with those of us hoping to start teacher training courses next month. I have just received a standard letter which states that as clearances have not come through, the first instalment of the training salary will be delayed, and possibly others after that. As I received my offer of a place back in January, and completed an old police clearance form, it will not cause me problems. My friend, however, will not be able to take up her place, as all the college can advise is that she get an overdraft. After three years at university, she's already reached her limit, so she simply cannot afford to go. It is a good job that there is no shortage of teachers, isn't it?

The college I'm going to sends us out on our first placement during the first week of term. That means that people who have not received clearance will be working with children, although it's reassuring to know that when the CRB finally returns the forms, those who are unfit to work with children will ***then*** *be removed from the course. So the government avoids potentially unfit trainees, but allows them to go into schools and work with children. It is, after all, a "funny old world".*

Yours,
KATIE DONNELLAN,

Via email.

Baching up the wrong tree

Sir,

While "View Finder" in the TV column was right to pour scorn on the idea of Vivaldi being the Rolling Stones to J.S. Bach's Beatles (Eye 1059), I feel that his/her comparison with Elton John is no nearer the mark.

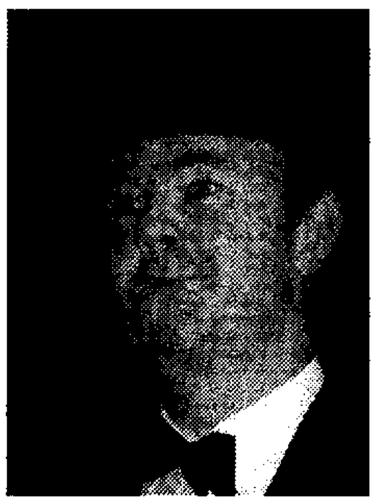
As Vivaldi was the composer with arguably the most profound impact on Bach's mature output, comparisons with Elvis might be more in order (after all, the Fabs idolised him). And while Vivaldi did not quite don The King's white sequinned jump suits, he did embrace in his later years a somewhat less challenging musical style, providing a parallel to the latter's Las Vegas period. Taking the dumb analogy one step further, in this scenario, Handel would have been the Beach Boys. But that's another story...

Regards,
GRAHAM DWYER,

Via email.

Lookalike

Hislop



Griffiths

Sir,

Watching the old Boulting brothers' satire I'm All Right Jack *on Channel 4 recently, I found myself wondering what your editor was doing wearing a bowler hat and calling himself Fred Griffiths. Is this a new career direction?*

Yours faithfully,
JONTY DRIVER,

Northiam, E. Sussex.

Fame game

Sir,

Regarding the news that Harry Enfield has attracted the attention of Ozzy Osbourne's solicitors for his portrayal of Gary Bloke in the future television adaptation of the Celeb cartoon strip, and the suggestion that Bloke is based upon Osbourne, surely Celeb's writers should sue Ozzy Osbourne for his attempt to portray an ageing rock star and his family as cartoon characters in the television series The Osbournes, evidently having based his programme on the long-running cartoon strip appearing in the Eye.

Yours,
DR DUNCAN CAMPBELL,

Via email.

LUVVIES

You struck gold with 'Good Will Hunting'. Are you still writing screenplays?

I haven't longed to write a screenplay again. I've been writing stuff just personally for me. Just single-word stuff to get me through the day. Sometimes I'll write down just 'root' or 'energy'.

BEN AFFLECK
Unreel magazine

Ultimately, it was about what will make us most happy and most fulfilled in this moment. If that's what we pulled off then I would say absolutely we pulled it off because we were levitating.

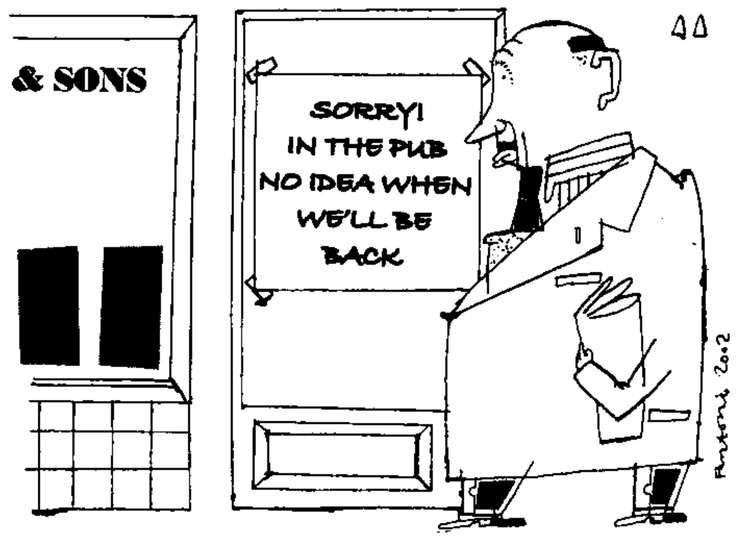
It's about being in love basically?

And executing that and that's very interpretive.

JULIA ROBERTS
(on her marriage to Danny Moder)
http://accesshollywood.msn.com

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Scenes You Seldom See



Putting Bromley on the map

Sir,

Re: Amicus animus (Letters, 1059). Enjoying nothing better than picking holes in your organ's esteemed letters page, I feel compelled to escalate John S. Cartwright's pedantry by focusing on his denouncement of "Bromley, Kent" as non-existent. As Bromley's lucky inhabitants will be aware from their payments to the GLA, Bromley is an administrative borough of London, but said inhabitants will also be aware, from the reams of junk mail that flood their letterboxes, that from the postal point of view, Bromley is firmly entrenched within Kent.

Assuming John S. Cartwright to be same John S. Cartwright who has failed in recent years to be elected to Croydon council as the Monster Raving Loony Party's candidate, I can only hypothesise that his lack of local knowledge would have made him an ideal councillor, if only the idiotic Croydon public had decided not to vote for the loonies again.

Yours,
MARK EASTON,

The London Borough of Croydon, Surrey.

Zero tolerance

Sir,

In the Hep C piece this week, you managed to add an 0 on to 60,000 to make a slightly exaggerated claim that 600,000 Britons are likely to become seriously ill with Hep C in the next few years. 600,000, if anything, is a generous estimate of the prevalence overall (diagnosed or undiagnosed).

Regards,
ROBERT MAYES,

London.

Payne in the arts

Sir,

Like many readers I was alarmed by your announcement that the Daily Telegraph's books pages are dumbing down. I hope I can assure them that the report contains hardly any facts.

Certainly many of the plans to review celebrity confessions are news to me, as is Martin Amis's response to the suggestion that he might review Elizabeth-Jane Howard's book. The remarks on Lulu and Ulrika Jonsson don't come from Corinna Honan (whose name you misspell); they come from publicists.

Moreover, in my stint at covering for Kate Summerscale, I managed to display my own kind of dumbness by sending out books on Jerry Springer and going big on Annabel Chong, a prolific performer in adult films. If I'd had a problem with "a four-column half-page shot of Rita Hayworth draped in a towel", it would have been the towel.

Yours sincerely,
TOM PAYNE,

Assistant Literary Editor, The Daily Telegraph.

Piss and wind

Sir,

You are to be applauded for your awareness on many medical and NHS issues (eg, MMR) but still play into the hands of the large pharmaceutical boys when you get a cheap laugh from urine therapy (Funny Old World, Eye 1059). Hardly a week goes by without some attestation to its effectiveness (try tuning in to John Peel's Home Truths on Radio 4).

In keeping with their efforts to regulate natural remedies out of existence or patent them, the pharmaceutical companies would not like the public to discover there is a free remedy with no side effects.

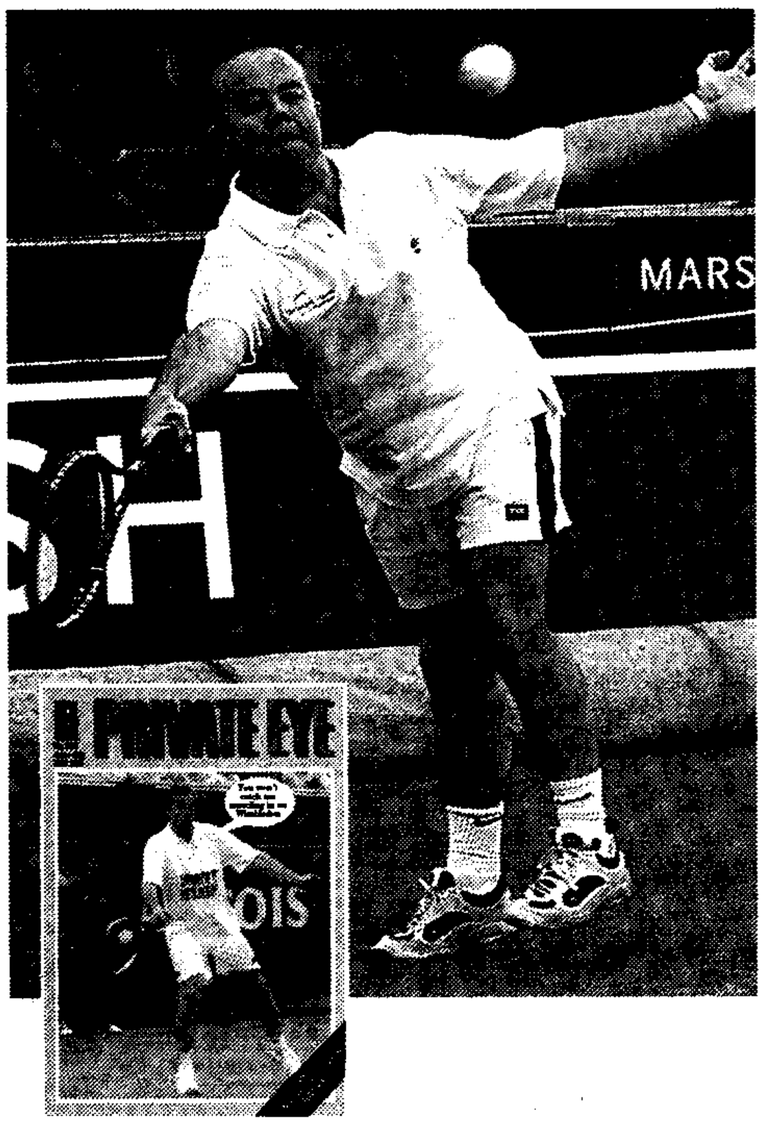
In the same issue (Letter from South Africa) you deride the suggestion that AIDS is not caused by the HIV virus. There are in fact many researchers who support this contention, but who are probably not in the pay of the pharmaceutical corporations.

Meanwhile, keep entertaining us!

NIC FORD,

Via email.

New balls



Sir,

Following your recent front cover mocking the Rev Blair for playing in a charity tennis match, I wonder if you have any other pictures of celebs at charity tournaments showing off their forehand technique (and thighs) for the benefit of newspaper photographers.

Yours hopefully,
ENA B. WHEEN,

Essex.

Star system

Sir,

I refer to your cartoon on the TV page of Eye 1060 ("If you win 'Big Brother', are you enough of a celebrity to enter 'Celebrity Big Brother'?") and wonder whether the creator had recently returned from Australia as well.

*When I was there three weeks ago, I noted that their first Celebrity BB had just commenced (shortly after the expiration of their BB2), and among the occupants of "the house" was a girl who had come **third** in BB1!*

Another case of life imitating art, or is that vice-versa?!

Yours embarrassingly (as I am an expat),
ANDREW STEWART,

Via email.

Railing

Sir,

In Conference Watch (1059) you were critical of Ray Price, MD of Arriva Trains Northern.

I worked with Ray in the early 90s and can assure you that you are kicking the wrong man. Ray has forgotten more about running a public service railway than the current crop of accountants and lawyers will ever learn. Anyone who leaves Railtrack on a point of principle should be decorated, not rubbished by you heathens.

He is a railwayman and a true gent.

I would cancel my subscription, but I'd miss the cartoons too much.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID CHEESEMAN,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"It's gold or nothing... and it's nothing. He comes away with a silver medal."
DAVID COLEMAN, BBC2
(Christopher Doll)

"... that's an almost perfect false start."
Commentator, BBC
(Paul King)

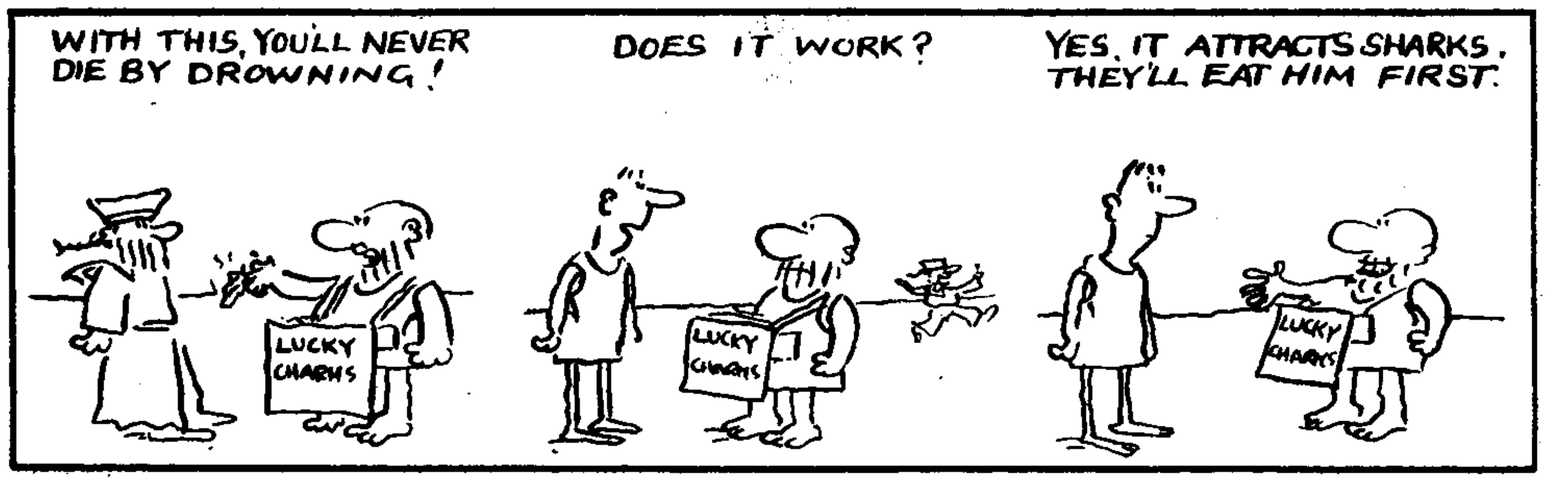
"Jamie Quarry of Scotland lies in second place. Meanwhile, the leading Briton is in fifth place."
BBC NEWS 24
(Colin Campbell)

"Michael Owen is NOT a diver. He knows when to dive, and when not to..."
STEVE HODGE, Talk Sport
(Keith Campbell)

Simon Bates: *You're off to Moscow, you and your husband... Have you ever been before?*
Competition winner: *Well, I went when I was at school.*
Simon Bates: *So you've never been before...*
Classic FM
(Mark Lascelles)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN


WITH THIS, YOU'LL NEVER DIE BY DROWNING!
DOES IT WORK?
YES. IT ATTRACTS SHARKS. THEY'LL EAT HIM FIRST.
LUCKY CHARMS
LUCKY CHARMS
LUCKY CHARMS

Generation grope

Sir,

I see that the BBC are now vigorously pursuing a policy of employing ever-younger TV presenters. Why, just the other night I noticed a fresh-faced youth fronting Newsnight in a clear bid to appeal to the clubbing generation. I wonder if you might have photographic evidence to support this theory?

Yours etc,
D. McKINNON,

Edinburgh.

Logging on

Sir,

*Loath as I am even to crawl to the defence of modern mathematics teaching (Letters, 1059, 1060), no one has mentioned **why** we were taught logarithms by the age of 12. It was the only practical way we could do the more complicated sums needed for trigonometry, for example. The rise of the pocket calculator – even in my schooldays – killed off those books of "log tables", now just curiosities; unlike my 1977 (Japanese!) calculator, still going strong. "Logs" are needed for the sciences and maths, but now one presses the "log" button for a number, not to understand what it means. (Or "ln" for "natural log", to show I know what I'm talking about.)*

In return, may I point out that reporting the constantly "improving" exam results forgets to mention one detail. In my time, a more-or-less fixed percentage of candidates would be awarded eg. an "A" grade, meaning the actual mark for an A grade would vary slightly year by year. Making the exam easier would not increase the number of A grades – which is the case now. A detail exploited by Edexcel, AQA, etc, for their financial gain, so it would seem.

From the youngest/last of the old fogies, who remembers the last of real education...

Yours,
JIM WAYFAIRER,

Via email.

Falling on deaf ears...

Sir,

Late evenings BBC2 programmes Bach's 48 preludes and fugues, often with repeats. These are accompanied with sub-titles for the deaf for the likes of me who can't hear the music.

What is the point?

N.T. SHEPHERD,

Bristol.

Cross words

Sir,

Given one of the underlying themes of Crossword 214 with answers including "big jobs", "arse", "anal-retentive" and "micturated", was it fair to select Michael Crapper as the winner? He probably had more time to sit and think than the rest of us.

ALAN JOWETT,

Via email.

Letter from **India**
from Our Own Correspondent

WE in India don't take the issue of animal poaching lightly. So it's with no shame we have learnt that one poacher in custody complains of torture at the hands of the law.

True, it's unusual that a city journalist like Kamal Badal should find himself charged under the wildlife protection act. But when he was arrested in June and the office of his employer, *Tehelka*, a news-based internet site and publishing house, was searched, police had no doubts. Two poachers, they told the national press, had been caught with the skins of three panthers, some deer horns, a home made pistol and video camera. They had implicated *Tehelka* and Badal.

But we have learnt to expect the unexpected from *Tehelka* and Tarun Tejpal, its editor-in-chief, who came to prominence peddling outrageous claims that some of our cricketers had taken bribes. Last September MPs wanted him charged under the immoral trafficking act – in effect, for pimping. Later in the year *Tehelka's* main financial backers were prevented from leaving the country and jailed, pending investigation of alleged violations of obscure financial offences.

It must be coincidental that the latest raid and arrest were made just as Tarun was due to give evidence to a judicial commission set up to investigate *Tehelka's* account of how Jaya Jaitley, confidante of defence minister George Fernandes and president of a small party in our ruling coalition, and Bangaru Laxman, secretary of the senior coalition partner, the Bharatiya Janata Party, had been secretly videotaped in March last year apparently taking money from undercover journalists in exchange for help with the procurement of defence contracts. Laxman's parting remark to the hidden camera was that the next instalment should be in dollars.

The honourable minister and Laxman both resigned in the wake of the allegations. But Fernandes was soon back in his job, well before the official inquiry had completed its work. Which is a pity, because he is now accused not only of presiding over a ministry riddled by greed and corruption but also of incompetence and stupidity.

Tehelka had set up a fake company, West End International, incorporated in London and owned by "non-resident Indians" (as expat Indians with large bank accounts are called – the rest are simply "immigrants"). Two journalists, Aniruddha Bahal and Samuel Matthew, armed with miniature cameras and a few rupees, then set about trying to interest the defence ministry in "thermal binoculars", a fictitious variation on an invention *Tehelka* stumbled upon on the internet.

The operation was bold but hardly sophisticated. Matthew, posing as a London businessman, had never been out of India. He told one army officer he banked with "Thomas Cook" and that the company's offices were located in "Manchester United". West End International was nevertheless able to secure meetings with Jaitley and Laxman. Though weak on Britain and the arms trade, its representatives proved quite capable at supplying the whisky and services of prostitutes in rooms at five-star hotels that helped scale the slippery pyramid of bung-wallahs – a process which prompted the immoral trafficking charge.

We Indians have come to rely on a press that shows due respect for the great and good, or at least the rich and powerful. We can therefore only applaud Jaitley who, when presented with the clearly taped evidence of bribery in return for the right word in the right ear, first accused *Tehelka* of being agents for our deadly enemies across the border in Pakistan, but now sensibly denies the meetings ever took place, insisting the tapes must have been electronically doctored.

For his own security, naturally, the government has generously supplied guards to look after Tarun at his home. Unbowed, he continues to pursue his ridiculous fantasy that a nexus of corruption pervades every institution and all levels of government, including, in this latest instance, the upstanding souls who manage forestry and animal preservation in India.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "This is an outrage. I am not a woman," Lemont Fullers told reporters in his cell at Lorain County Jail, Ohio, "I am a man who impersonates women. It's true that I had my testicles removed as a teenager, but that was because of a severe hernia, and although I've been entering beauty pageants since the age of sixteen, I always did so as a female impersonator, not as a woman. I'm certain of my sexual identity. Why is everyone else confused?"

Earlier, jail administrator Sgt. Dominic Manacci had explained the difficulties posed to them by forty-two-year-old Fullers, who is currently awaiting trial for credit card fraud. "Our very experienced doctors have examined her throughly and concluded that she is a woman, so we're housing her in a women's prison. We know that she was in a women's prison in Illinois in 1995, under the name of Caroline Rodgers, and she didn't complain then. Trouble is, a few weeks ago, another woman prisoner who was sharing a cell with Fullers complained that she had seen male genitals, so we sent Fullers to a men's prison. She came back after a day though. We'd rather not say why. So now Fullers is in solitary confinement, not as a punishment, but simply because we don't know what else to do with her. Or him. Or whatever."

Later, Fullers stated that "I've never tried to deceive anyone. I've just been looking out for my own safety. I'm not a woman, but I was beaten and pack raped when they put me in the men's prison. Men in jail don't treat people like me very politely." *(The Plain Dealer, 9/7/02. Spotter: Peter M. Ham)*

— ● —

● *"I think it's a cultural situation," Tim Balbirnie of the Asia Market Intelligence Group told a press conference in Hong Kong, "and most of the bad habits are carried out subconsciously. This kind of situation seems to be more common in northern parts of Asia, but as we get more Westernised, it's gradually becoming a less acceptable situation to do these things in public."*

Balbirnie was commenting on a survey, conducted by his company, into the persistence of unhygienic personal habits throughout Asia. "40% of those questioned about the situation admitted to engaging in at least one unhygienic habit in public," he added. "The situation is that Taiwanese are the most frequent nose pickers (20.5%), but Filipinos are the most frequent spitters (26.5%), and also came top for nail-clipping in public (27%). Here in Hong Kong, 22% cough in public without covering their mouths, even though they themselves disapprove of the habit."

Hong Kong Medical Association President Dr Lo Wing-lok warned that: "Spitting increases the risk of spreading tuberculosis, and nail clippings spread highly infectious fungal spores which collect in the dirt beneath the nail. Nose picking is worst of all, because if a food handler has his finger in his nose, and then prepares a salad or sandwich, he'll spread bacteria that generate toxins and cause violent food poisoning. And anyway, who wants to eat a lettuce covered in snot?" (South China Morning Post, 13/7/02. Spotter: Rhonda Palmer)

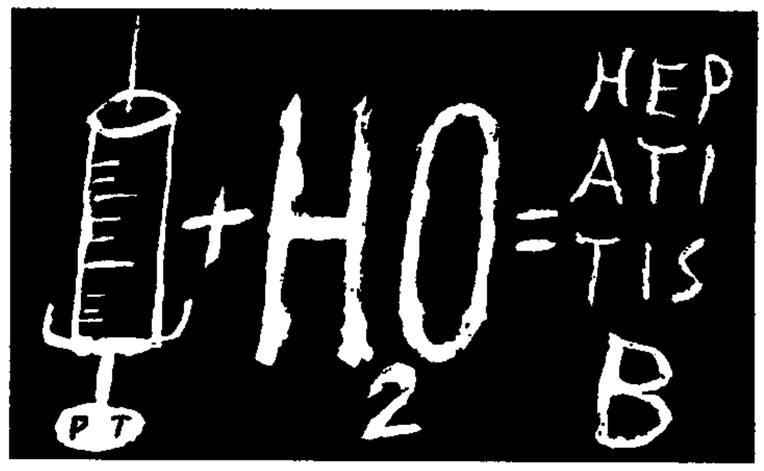
— ● —

● "Being in Mr Qu's class was alright most of the time," eight-year-old Gang Gang explained to reporters at his school in Shaanxi's Chunhua county, "unless you misbehaved. But if you fell asleep in class, or you hadn't done your homework, he'd take out his syringe, fill it with water, and then jab you in the bottom with it as a punishment. He was the only teacher in the school who did this, and now he's gone."

Earlier, schoolmaster Qu Zhaojun had defended his unusual disciplinary methods, which had led to his dismissal after just two months at the school.

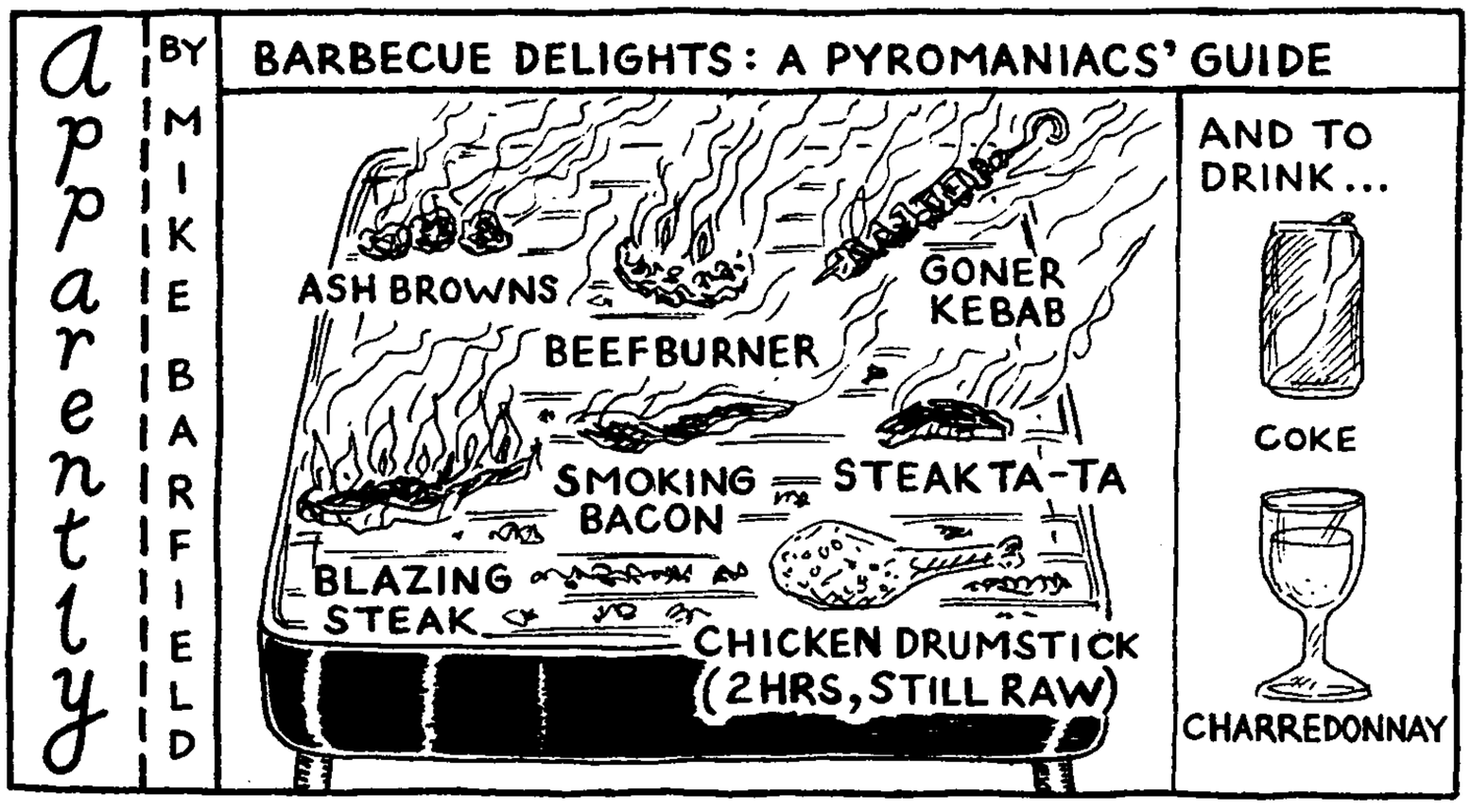
"I didn't hurt any of the children with my syringe. I only did it to frighten them into good behaviour, and into doing their homework. Most of the students felt the jab of my syringe at one time or another, and my water-injection theory was starting to yield good results. It's a tragedy that I cannot continue, and put water into them throughout the summer, until they take their end-of-year exams."

After discovering that Qu only possessed



one syringe, which he had been using to jab all his pupils, all forty-one students in his class underwent medical check-ups. Several were found to be infected with the Hepatitis B virus, but it is not known whether they contracted it from Qu's syringe. *(Beijing Youth Daily, 21/7/02. Spotter: Mike Hill)*

apparently BY MIKE BARFIELD



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

As you can see, I am back at the vicarage after our very welcome family holiday in France, where we all had a chance to recharge our batteries!

It was a real pleasure to be in a place where there was no need to visit the bureau de change every time one wished to visit another country!

Not that we had any need to do so, since we were only planning to stay in France!

But just think what a timesaver it would have been, if we had been planning a trip to, say, Spain or Tuscany, if each time we came to the frontier, we had had to go to the bureau, and exchange all the contents of our wallets (or in Cherie's case, handbag) in order to change, say, francs into, say, pesetas, or lire, or whatever currency happened to be appropriate to whichever country it was that we were about to enter!

But all this has now been miraculously swept aside by the new euro which makes everything so easy!

And I couldn't help wondering, as we still had to wait in the queue to swap our antiquated pounds for this new modern currency of tomorrow, that it was an outward and visible sign of people throwing aside the prejudices of the past and joining hands as one happy human family!

I have no doubt that Our Lord himself would have been at the very forefront of the campaign to get Britain involved with this exciting experiment!

But after this vision of togetherness, I confess it was somewhat disappointing when I got home to find such a division of views in the parish over the vital need to support the great crusade against World Satanism which is being led by my very good friend, the Rev. Dubya Bush of the Church of the Latter Day Morons.

Hey, look, I know how some of you feel about the Rev. Dubya! And sure, his style isn't mine!

A lot of what he says may not seem to make much sense!

Indeed, a lot of it may seem to be pretty mad!

In fact, a lot of you may be thinking why doesn't our vicar do more to keep him under control and generally calm things down?

But, look, don't we all of us know someone in our family or in our immediate circle who is a bit like the Rev. Dubya?

Someone who is liable to fly off the handle and threaten to declare World War Three at the drop of a hat!

Well, the last word these people want to

hear is "don't"!

If you tell them that it is perhaps not such a good idea to do something, then this only helps to egg them on!

So that's why my policy with the Rev. Dubya has always been to agree with him and to support anything he proposes.

That way we've remained good friends and I hope that, by knowing when to keep silent, I have helped him to see the error of his ways!

I also hope that this will help to reassure all those fainthearts and pessimists in the parish who may be inclined to "wobble" at this time. (Mrs Short and Mr Cook may have a pretty good idea who I mean!).

Yours,

Tony

To Remember In Your Prayers

● Mr Meacher, our parish "green", who made a number of quite uncalled-for and frankly idiotic attacks on the vicar and poor Mr Prescott for not taking the threat of global warming seriously enough! This is very unfair on John who is not always very quick on the uptake and has been doing his best to look after things while I have been away. *(Thanks, John!)* Let us pray that Mr Meacher makes the most of his forthcoming holiday in South Africa, and should he choose not to return, let us all wish him a happy and fulfilling retirement! T.B.

Parish Postbag

Dear Vicar,

I was disgusted to read in the local paper that the vicar is still forcing his sexual attentions on his wife, despite the fact that she is nearly 50, a mother of four and a distinguished professional woman in her own right. Once again, we see the stereotypical male enslaving his

Yours sincerely,
Germaine Greer,
The Old Belfry, Barmy Crescent.

The Editor reserves the right to cut letters for reasons of space

URGENT

PCC Meeting

The Vicar Writes:

People are going around saying that I am unwilling to call an "extraordinary meeting" of the PCC to discuss Rev Dubya Bush's campaign to rid the world of Satan.

Needless to say, this is quite contrary to the truth. I have gone on record saying that I am a "listening vicar", available round-the-clock to listen to all kinds of views, however out-of-step they may be with my own thinking.

The problem arises with dates. I have, as you all know, a very busy schedule, having to catch up with all the important matters that have piled up on my desk during my brief but well-earned battery recharge.

As a result, it is with great regret that I have to say that I am unable to give any firm date for a meeting at this time. Bear with me. I am sure we can work something out in the long-term.

T.B.

TAR VERY MUCH! to our charming hosts M & Mme Perrin of Sunshine Cigarettes

Sorry!!!

■ IN THE last newsletter, it was inadvertently stated that the vicar and his family would not this year be enjoying free hospitality while on their annual holiday. Some of you have found out that this was not strictly speaking the case. Cherie and I fully intended to pay our way at the Château Enorme, but our host, Monsieur Perrin, insisted that, since it was a private house, it would be rather ridiculous if he asked us to pay for the pleasure of staying with him!

The Daily Hellograph
and all other papers

The Nation Mourns

WORDS cannot begin to express... sense of grief... agony... stunned... numb community in tears... a single rose... coming to terms... agony... why oh why?... Parents' dignity... churches packed... every parent's worst nightmare... why? whole nation stunned... the news we all dreaded to hear... the longest night... agony of waiting... keep going, there's no other news (Ed.)... tiny village united in grief... a nation mourns... media intrusion (not us)... respect their privacy... media hampering police enquiries (not us)... life must go on... questions remain... why oh why?

On Other Pages

What has Gone Wrong With Us? by Melanie Phillips **94**
The Evil Gene That Lurks Within Us All by Dr Raj Persaud **95**
***I* Too Have Children** by D.J. Hack **96**
Tasteless Cartoon by Mac **97**
PLUS All The Premiership Goals

THE SAD LONERS WHO PROBABLY DID IT

by Crime Staff **Hugh Dunnett**

Psychological profile... kept themselves to themselves... staring eyes... Jekyll and Hyde... tattoo... tortured background... Grimsby... fish factory... mad look... not much evidence to go on... almost certainly guilty... string 'em up.

Myra Hindley

"I met him on the Internet"

THE TIMETABLE OF TERROR

How Inspector Knacker Tracked The Killers

Monday
Knacker warns killers he has no leads to go on at this stage.

Tuesday
Knacker appeals to killers to give themselves up.

Wednesday
Knacker tells media "We have every hope they are still alive, but we are still looking for the killers."

Thursday
Knacker sets killers a deadline: "Ring me on my mobile by midnight, or you will get away with it," he warns.

Friday
Knacker of the Yard sent from London to replace village Knacker. Couple give themselves up.

Saturday
Couple charged. Knacker tells press, "This is a triumph for good old-fashioned policing."

Grief As Story Ends

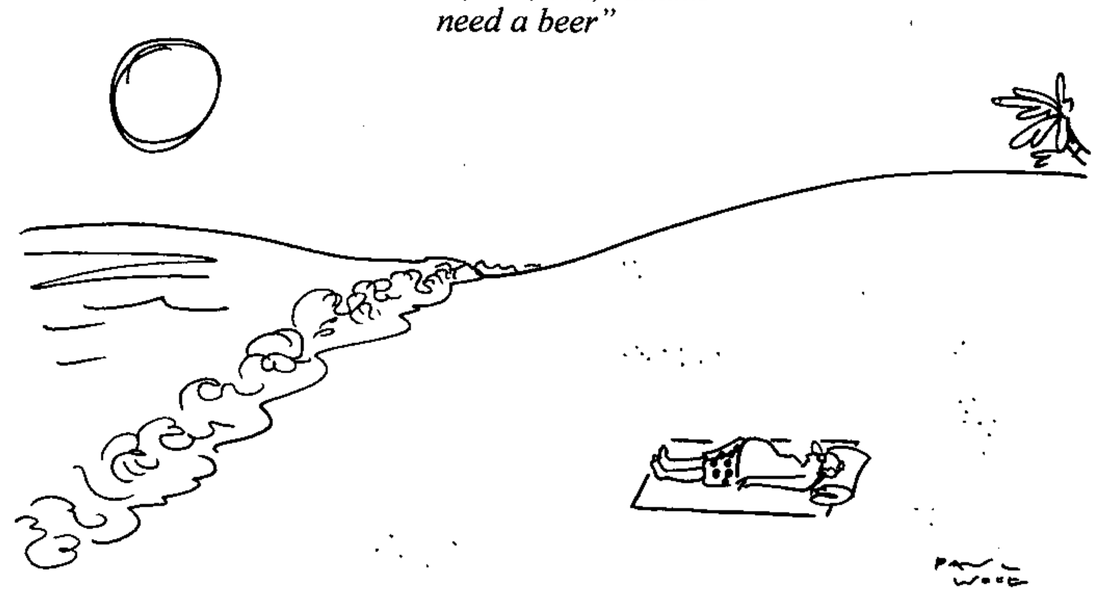
by Our Media Staff **Sally Season**

THERE was an overwhelming sense of shock and loss last night as journalists and editors alike were coming to terms with the news that the story was finally over.

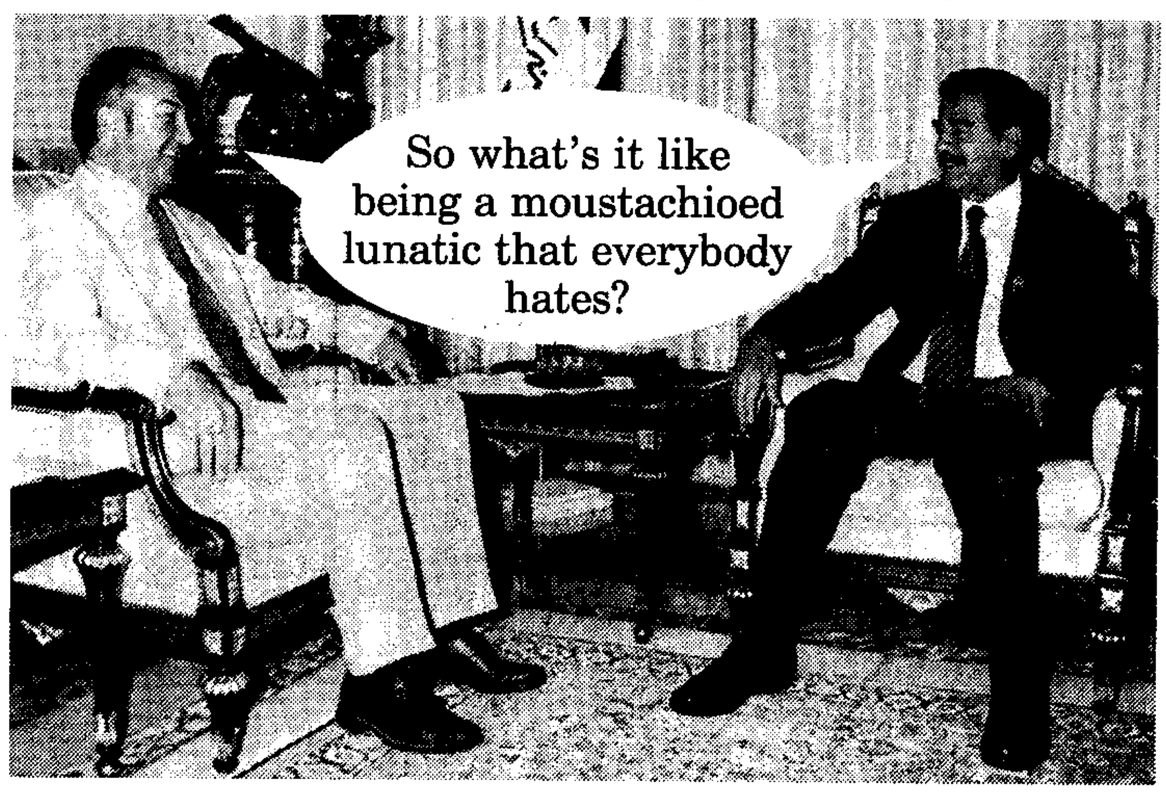
Said one, "Nothing prepared us for the moment when we knew the story was no longer with us. Now we will have to rebuild our lives, by filling pages with pictures of celebrities with no clothes on!"

On other pages
Pictures of celebrities with no clothes on.

"Mmmm, sun, sea, sand...I need a beer"



GALLOWAY SHOCK



POLLY FILLER

NEVER again! Whatever possessed us to go on holiday to the Lot with our (former) best friends Alison and Tom, plus three of the most horrid little children I've ever had the misfortune to get the Nanny to shout at – namely Clovis, Emma and Satan (sorry, Sam)? Because that, God help us, is how we spent the last two weeks of my life – and I'm not exaggerating.

Hell would have been preferable – and not as hot! 33 degrees in the shade, Alison querying every decision I made (well, *somebody* had to decide where and what we were going to eat), Tom going off for walks on his own, and the three superbrats showing no interest at all in the lingerie shops in nearby Cahors.

By the time I had lost my temper with the sulky Estonian nanny for the umpteenth time (what's wrong with walking 7 kms every morning to buy the bread and mineral water? Besides, she could afford to lose half a stone), we were all at meltdown – and not because of the heat.

And you're probably asking yourself where was the useless Simon all this time? Being useless – that's where he was. How he thought it would help the ever-widening rift between the Fillers and the Dempseys by sitting in the local Bar Tabac, watching the Tour de Lot cycle race on Canal Dix Sept, is a mystery only the useless Simon can solve.

I KNEW it was going to go wrong from day one, when the opportunist Alison nabbed the end of the kitchen table with the comfortable seats. When I knew her at Exeter University she was so easy-going, and wouldn't say boo to a goose. But I couldn't print her language when I demanded that she sat at the end of the table near the dishwasher and noisy fridge. And to think she's a vicar's daughter. Well, f*** you, Alison.

The final insult was when Tom and Alison said they could stand me no more, and decamped tout *en famille* to a hotel in the village, leaving us on our own, with just the nanny and demanding toddler Charlie for company.

If you read this, Alison and Tom, may I suggest that you don't bother sending us a Christmas card – as we certainly won't be sending one to you. So there!

© Polly Filler, all newspapers.

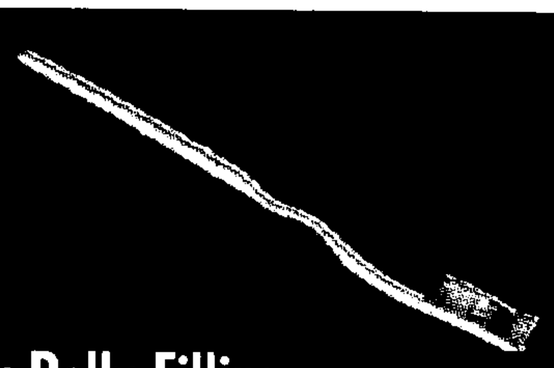
NEW OLD RHYMES

Old Macdonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O
And on that farm he had some
tobacco plants
Until Mr Mugabe took it away.

Anon.

ON THE SPOT FINES
I WAS FINED £40 FOR WEARING BROWN SHOES IN TOWN!
PISS OFF!
YOU CAN'T FINE 'IM! 'E'S A GOOD BOY 'E IS!
YOU CANT FO*!!P@! FINE US FOR FO*!!P@! SWEARING YOU C*!@!
FOR KILLING THAT OLD LADY. £80
HE WAS CYCLING ON THE PAVEMENT USING A MOBILE PHONE
I'VE RUN OUT OF TICKETS!
FKU

Match the Celebs with their Toothbrush



by Polly Filling

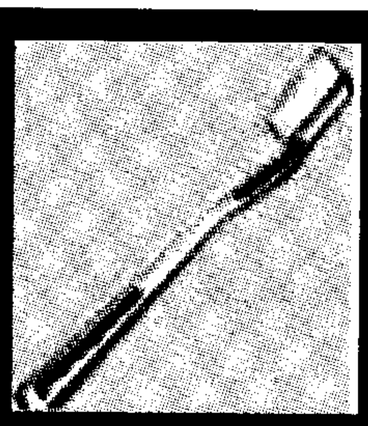
PSYCHIATRISTS have long known that our choice of toothbrush says more about us than we think. The subtle combination of handle and brush, the choice betwen electric and water-fuelled, between curved and straight – these are seminal indicators of the true person within.

Can you match our chosen celebrities with their toothbrush? Your solution could earn you and your partner a life supply of Harrods Homebrand Toothpaste (as used by Mohamad al Fugger).

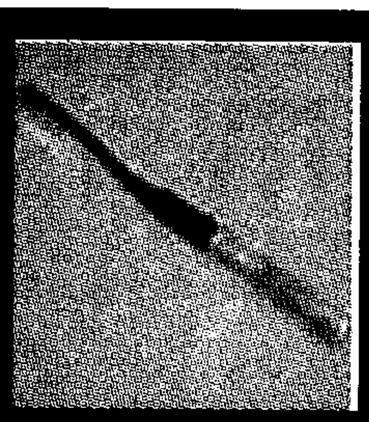
Now turn to page 94 for the correct answers.

A. No sweeties. Sweetie, or your teeth won't look ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS!

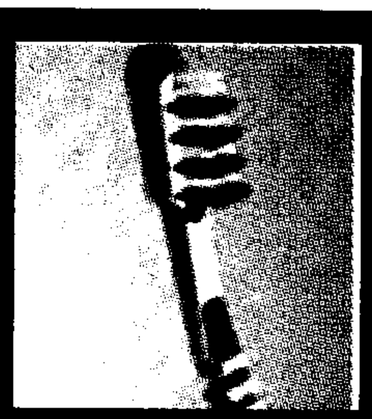
B. This celebrity's toothbrush isn't as POSH as his wife's!



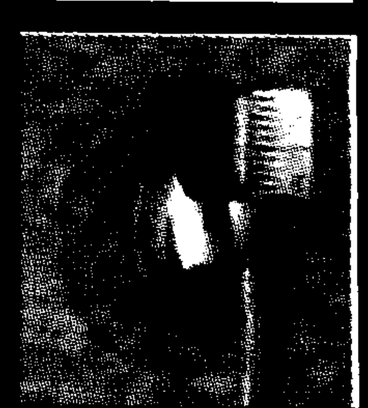
C. Does my gum look big in this, ANDREW?!



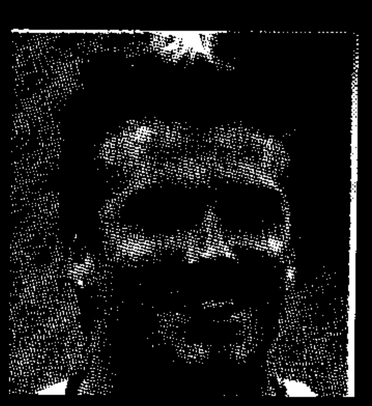
D. STEVE gave this famous toothbrusher the BRUSH OFF!

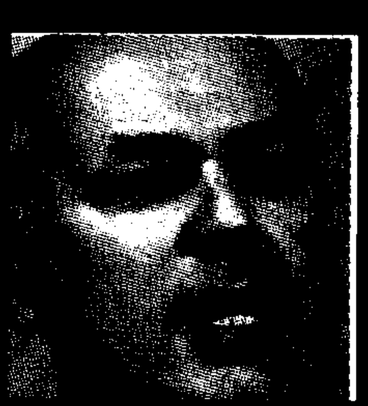


E. AHEM, this has more bristles than it's owner's head!



F. AND FINALLY... whose toothbrush is this?!





Bores Demand Equal Time With Bores

by Our Religious Staff **A. Theist**

A HUNDRED of Britain's most heavyweight bores have petitioned the BBC for "equal access" to the Today programme's prestigious 'Bore of the Day' slot.

The bores include such well-known names as Sir Ludicrous Kennedy, Sir Harold Pinter, Dame Polly Toynbee and Professor Sir Richard Borekins.

Radio Bore

Says Sir Ludicrous, "It is outrageous that every day we are forced to listen to the mindless bletherings of the BBC's so-called God squad, such as the Chief Druid, the Bishop of Neasden and Pappadum Singh, when bores such as myself are kept off the air."

World-famous playwright Sir Harold Pinter OM said, "This censorship is worse than Hitler's Germany. They will be burning our plays next."

Sir Ludicrous is 106.

What You Won't Hear

Script for *Bore Of The Day* slot, written by **Harold Pinter**

Naughtie *(for it is he)*: And now, to present Bore For The Day, we are very honoured to welcome to the Today studio one of the greatest bores of all time, Dame Harold Pinter.

Pinter: You know, in a very real sense, when I heard the news that the imperialist warmonger Bush was planning a genocidal attack on that champion of human rights Saddam Hussein, I wrote a letter to the Guardian saying what a bastard he is.

(Two minutes of menacing silence)

Naughtie: And now over to Michael Fish for today's weather.

Fish: Hullo again *(cont'd. 94 kHz)*

BESTIE
SO COME ON CHAPS, LET'S GIVE THOSE HORRID FRENCHIE OIKS A JOLLY GOOD THRASHING. AND AFTER, THE PIMMS ARE ON ME IN THE WINE BAR
HOORAY HENRY V

"Well done! What do you want – a goldfish or an A-Level?"

A-LEVELS ARE A POOR TEST OF ABILITY

by Our Education Correspondent **Dee Grades**

IT WAS revealed today that A-Level exam results do not prove that journalists have any ability to write coherently, meaning they'll be ill-equipped for a life outside of Canary Wharf.

"Just writing easy articles bemoaning the state of A-Levels doesn't prove anything," complained one horrified seventeen-year-old school leaver. "Everyone knows they don't need to have an original thought in their heads to do this, they just learn it all by rote."

Pass Poor

"Most of these articles were just copied off previous papers saying exactly the same thing last year."

The journalists, though, insist that these articles had been printed on their merit, and hadn't just been passed by their editor because it's the summer and he has nothing else to fill the news pages with.

GLENDA SLAGG

BRITAIN'S SUMMER SIZZLER

■ **WHATEVER happened to the British Summer, I ask you!!?!!? The High Street looks like something out of Venice!!?!? The garden's a swamp??!? And the kids are a-shakin' and a-shiverin' in their bathing costumes??!? They're calling it Great Brrrritain!!! Geddit??!? No wonder the Departure Lounge at Stansted is a-teeming' and a-streaming' with thousands of disgruntled Brits in search of just a few seconds of precious sunshine??!??!**

■ PHEW what a scorcher!!?!?! Whatever happened to the good old British Summer when we sat on the beach a-shiverin' and a-shakin', trying to stop our ice-cream getting soaked!!! Not any more, mister??!?! Cos it's hotter than Cos (Geddit????! It's a Greek island in the Pelopponese STOOPID!!!?!) No need to fly off to Florida when you can get sunstroke just by sitting indoors watching TV!!?!?!

■ *HEY THERE!!!! Were you one of the lucky ones who got a tartan invite to the Big Yin Birthday Bash at Castle Connolly!???! What a galaxy of stars – Charles and Camilla, Sir Paul McCartney, Bob Geldof and the world's loveliest woman Dame Judi Dench!!?!?!*

■ **ARENCHAGLAD you stayed at home when you could have been dancing the Gay Gordons with Britain's Biggest Bunch of Bores!!!?! Camilla and Charles, Bob Geldof, Dame Judi Dench. For Gawd's sake!!?!? Somebody wake me up wontcha PLEEEASE!!?!**

HERE they are, Glenda's Bank Holiday Beefcakes!!!?!

● **Roy Keane** – Manchester's Mister Nasty. Come and show me your famous tackle any time, Roy!?!?!

● **Toby Young and Sheridan Morley** – Fancy a threesome???!? Me neither!!!?!

● **Dr Rowan Williams** – He is the new Primate. Crazy name, crazy beard!!?!??

Byeeee!!!

Advertisement

SHOW YOU CARE!!!
with a GNOME MEMORIAL GARDEN

MORE and more people these days, when they lose a loved one, feel a deep sense of incompleteness, a kind of emptiness that craves for something wonderful and permanent.

The Gnome Memorial Garden, designed by world-famous memorial garden architect Ingeborg van der Jardin RHSG, founder of the Minnesota Institute for Memorial Gardenology, is just what you need to make your sense of loss complete!

Each garden is personalised to the memory of your departed loved one, family member or pet, round the following themes:

● **The "Ring of Bright Water", a Japanese-style moat-feature.**

● **The "Wooded Glade of Remembrance", incorporating any three of the following tree species: Cupressus leylandii, ground elder, ragwort (plus picnic furniture).**

● **The "Stones of Eternity", based on traditional Viking cairns to mark the last resting place of Norse chieftains on their journey to Valhalla.**

PLUS: audio-loop of your departed's favourite music to play from loudspeakers discreetly concealed in the memorial.

Send now for details to Gnome Memorial Garden Offer, PO Box 4871, Unit 7B, The Diana Princess of Wales Trading Estate, Hemel Hempstead.

World of Soccer

BIG RON BACKS O'THUG IN BOOK FLARE-UP

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man In The Internet Cafe With The BLT Sarnie And The Double Latte To Go

THE WORLD of soccer was rocked to its foundations by the admission in a newly published book by Neasden captain, Irish-born Mick O'Thug, that he kicked a Dollis Hill defender to death in a pre-season friendly.

"I have no regrets," writes O'Thug in his memoir *I'm A Right Bastard.* "He got his just desserts."

Murder Most Foul

O'Thug graphically describes how he premeditated the murder of Sonderbond Toksvig after an exchange of angry words about an alleged injury to the Icelandic "Wizard of the Geysers".

But last night Neasden supremo Ron Knee, 59, told reporters: "Naturally I am ashen-faced. But I am standing by Mick.

"He is basically a troubled genius who is searching for perfection but who occasionally resorts to murder as a means of escaping the demons that haunt him."

LATE SCORE

PG Tips Charity Shield (First Round)

AFC Neasden 0
Belmarsh Academicals 1
(Pevsner [o.g.]) *(A.E.T.)*

(Man of the Match: Belmarsh's exciting No. 3256178 shirt Archer, J.)

News In Brief

A-LEVEL JOY

NERVOUS newspaper editors sitting anxiously at their desks up and down Canary Wharf were rejoicing this morning as they received the photos of Britain's teenagers celebrating their A-Level results.

"It was just what we were hoping; 94% of them were pretty seventeen-year-old girls in bikinis, cut-off midriff tops and tight jeans," said a delighted editor. "Obviously some boys must have passed too, but we didn't want to print any pictures of them".

ELVIS LATEST

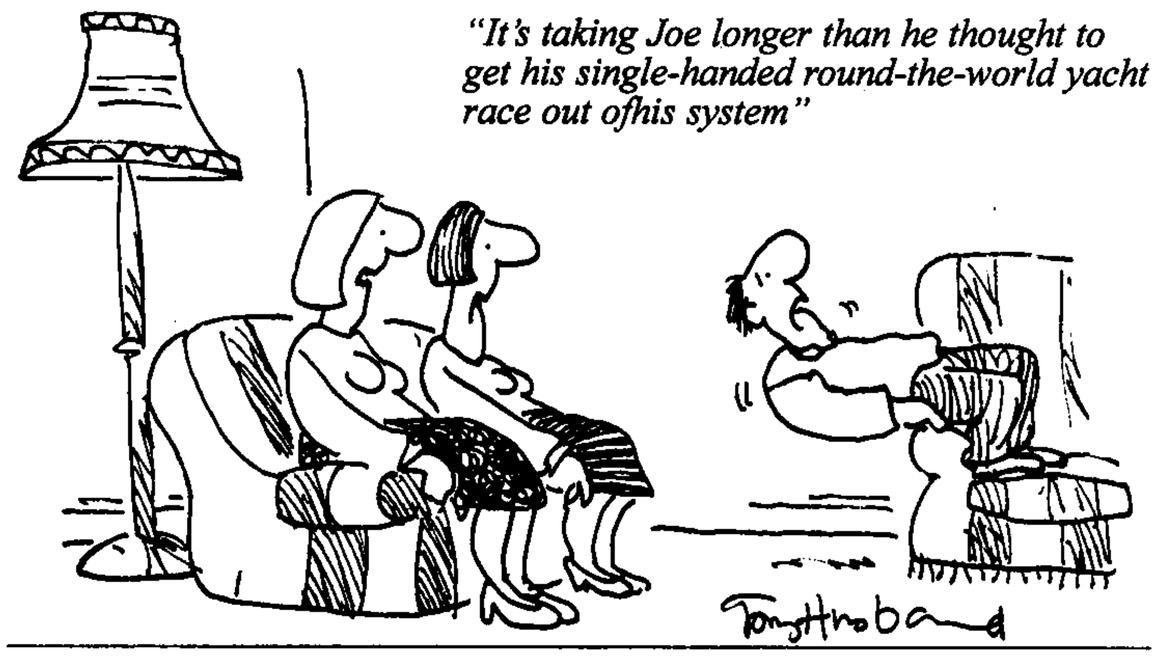
AN eye-witness's sighting of 'news' in one of Britain's newspapers hiding amidst all the Elvis retrospectives has been dismissed by editors as nothing more than wild speculation.

"Any sightings of news are just the product of an over-eager imagination," said one editor. "Those really weird 'news' fanatics just can't accept the truth that 'news' died out years ago because it gorged itself on a non-stop diet of junk about celebrity lives".

ENVIRONMENT NEWS

THE Government's Green Agenda today mounted a vigorous defence of the levels of Deputy Prime Minister in the atmosphere.

"We accept that the public's level of exposure to Prescott's gas and hot air whenever he is interviewed on the Today Programme is still dangerously high," admitted the Green agenda, "but the Government is working hard to reduce this."


"It's taking Joe longer than he thought to get his single-handed round-the-world yacht race out ofhis system"
Tonythreobald

Gingerbread Traditional Person
35g
Fortnum & Mason

0.10 Blair Bitch Project. Erotikfilm (USA 1999).
Neue Zuricher Zeitung

BBC SHOCK LABOUR HACK INTO NEWS DEPARTMENT

The hack in question

the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOD
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME BOSS?
YES, IT'S ABOUT YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY...
...AND ESPECIALLY THE "I WANTED TO F**KING HIT HIM HARD!"
BRILLIANT! COMPLETELY DEFLECTS ANY MEDIA ATTENTION OVER YOUR NEW £20,000 WEEKLY BONUS!
I DO MY BEST BOSS!

Blimey guv! See about them floods in Czecko... Czkosolu... Czkovlov... Prague. What a mess. I ask you. And see that poor old elephant? They just shot him because they couldn't think of nothing else to do. Surely they got cranes out there or something? Or they could have got an aeroplane and sort of lifted him up somehow?

But shooting him, I mean... Always have been a bit cruel, them Austrians. Hitler was one, wasn't he? But Hitler never shot an elephant.

A Taxi Driver

And where, I ask you, Guv, in all sincerity, was Rolf Harris when he was wanted?

I'll tell you.

Not in bleedin' Prague.

I mean to say, Guv, we are all kids at heart and hate to see animals suffer, especially elephants, with their long trunks, big ears and sad eyes. My four-year-old, Brittany, loves Dumbo. And that's my point.

You know, I always say that if elephants were in charge there'd be no more war. Makes you think.

COMING SOON IN THE EYE

'THE SECRET DIANA YOU NEVER KNEW'

by her former bodyguard KEN BROKE

IN THIS exclusive serial-isation we reveal the hitherto unknown secrets about the woman they called Princess of Hearts.

Did you know...

- **Diana was a neurotic woman who suffered from serious eating disorders.**
- **She was besotted by a married art dealer and once rang him 400 times in one evening.**
- **Diana did not love her husband whom she suspected of an affair with a married woman (believed to be Camilla Parker-Bowles).**
- **Er...**
- **That's it.**

In his position as the Princess's bodyguard, Broke was in a unique position to know her innermost thoughts and passions.

Now, in the public interest, he has decided to break his code of silence in order to make a lot of money *(Surely "tell it like it was"? Ed.)*

Revealed: Mother-in-law

Shool's positive ethos praised

Wilts Standard

Official world wankings: 1 Tiger Woods (USA) 10.55, 2 Phil Mickelson (USA) 10.35, 3 Ernie Els (RSA) 7.27, 4 Retief Goosen (RSA) 7.06,

Dundee Courier

"Hi – I'm on the River Styx"

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

BRIAN SEWELL

I don't suppose there are many modern spoons in your collection. Am I right?

You couldn't have said a truer word, even if you tried. The sheer vulgarity of modern design, not just of the humble spoon, but of all contemporary kitchen equipment, makes one despair.

What's your earliest memory of spoons?

I remember very vividly being taken to the Victoria & Albert Museum by my grandmother. It was a bitterly cold February morning and Exhibition Road was pure Sickert – the dark, brooding buildings against a threatening snow-filled sky...

Which brings us to the fascinating question of spoons in art...

Indeed. And fascinating it is. One of the great masterpieces of spoon painting hangs in the Musée de Napoléon in Limoges. The artist of this famous wood panel is generally believed to be Giovanni di Janini, but I think this attribution is profoundly mistake, as the work is much earlier, almost certainly by the Master of Antwerp.

I'm afraid I don't know the painting. Is it full of spoons?

No, of course not. No artist of any rank would paint a picture of a spoon, *per se*. This picture shows St Gervase offering a spoon to the infant Jesus. It's an overwhelming image and one that remains with one long after one is dead. Most modern art is a sort of pornography which is there to stimulate but does nothing else.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

Alas, no. Would that it had!

NEXT WEEK: Ann Widdecombe *"Me And My Frying Pan."*

TOUGH GETS COUGH

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

AS RUMBLINGS of Tory discontent grew to a crescendo yesterday, Tory leader Iain Duncan Cough hit out at his critics by remaining silent.

Said a close aide, "It has been astonishing the way Iain has kept his nerve in the face of all these vicious and unprincipled calls for him to resign."

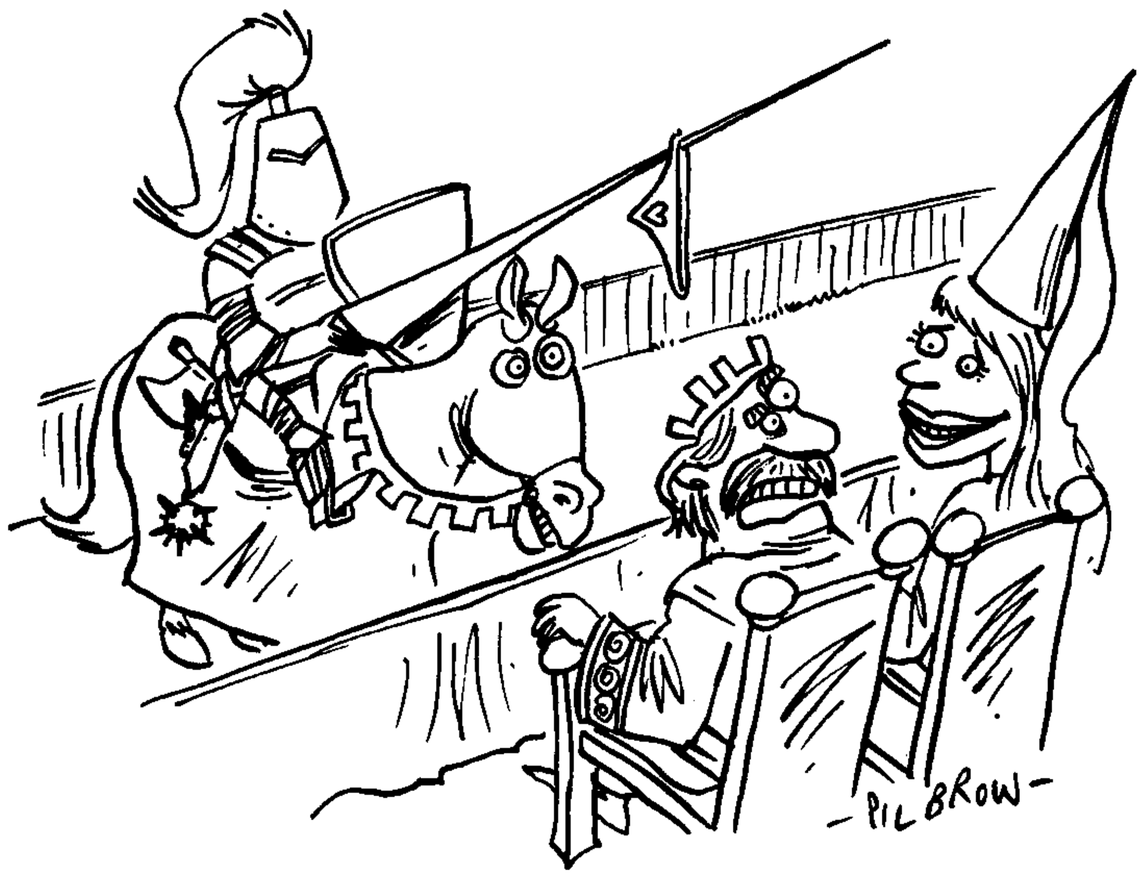
Deep Throat

The growing row over Cough's leadership came to a climax at the weekend with an outspoken article in the top Tory grassroots magazine *The Disraeli Review*, alleging that Cough has failed to show a lead to his party, by his strategy of saying nothing about anything.

But Cough supporters accused his critics of "completely missing the point."

"By keeping his head down and his mouth shut, Iain is playing a long game," said one Tory insider yesterday, who wished to be named but we can't remember who he was.

"I like to keep the place just the way it was the day she left"



"Your handkerchief would have sufficed"

POETRY CORNER

Correction

In my poem
"In Memoriam
Spud Melin, American
Inventor"

I erroneously
Attributed to him
The invention of
The frisbee.

I was wrong,
As a reader
Was quick to
Point out.

But now,
As luck would
Have it,
The perfector
Of the frisbee
'Steady' Ed Headrick
Has passed on.

So farewell then.

E.J.Thribb (17½)

University Vacancies

(continued from p. 94)

CONTEMPORARY ASHTRAY DESIGN

University of Legoland (formerly Windsor Safari Park) P45, WHSMITH, ESSO, LUX

TXT MSSG STDS

Nokia University (formerly World of Toasters, Bracknell) ASAP, BLT, KPNUTS, IM4U

HISTORY OF THE BIRO

Toynbee University (formerly Toynbee Poly) PLJ, BOAC, FCUK

DAYTIME TV STUDIES

University of Life (formerly Your Lounge) BBC1, ITV2, C4, SKY

"The daft thing is, we've loads of cheese in the fridge

News In Brief

ON-THE-SPOT REWARDS FOR HOOLIGANS

A NEW system of "on-the-spot rewards" for hooligans, which is undergoing trials in two British newspapers, has been hailed as a great success.

"We believe that by instantly handing over a six-figure sum to Roy Keane for the serialisation of his book where he goes into graphic description of kicking and maiming opponents," said the editors of the Sun and the Times, "we have sent out a strong message to other newspaper editors that what sells newspapers is gratuitous stories of thuggish violence."

Celeb

LIGGER

WELL DEBS, I HAVE TO SAY YOU LOOK FABULOUS.
THANKS.
YOUR LIPS LOOK DIFFERENT, SLIGHTLY FULLER IN SHAPE...
DO THEY?
SO IS IT TRUE THAT YOU'VE HAD INJECTIONS TO PLUMP UP YOUR LIPS FOR COSMETIC REASONS?
ABSOLUTELY NOT.
I HAD IT DONE TO BOOST MY SELF-ESTEEM AND MAKE ME FEEL BETTER ABOUT MYSELF.
OH.

Literary Review

D'ya Kensington?

Porno
Irvine Welsh
(Jonathan Cape, £10)

LADIES and gentlemen, southern bourgeoisie all, what are we to make of the barbarous north-of-the-border irruption that is the fiction of Irvine Welsh?

A good place to start would be the recently published selected rants of James Kelman (*Essays*, Secker & Warburg, £17.99), a man with some claim to be regarded as the grand-daddy of the whole Caledonian loudmouth mob, though now of course wholly superannuated by fashion. To read Uncle Jim's denunciations of genteel Home Counties English prose and its notional stranglehold over the nation's literary development, one might be deluded into thinking that the English novel really was a sedate little drawing room bossed about by gorgons like Anita Brookner and A.S. Byatt, with Jim and his kenspeckle compatriots kept eternally on the doorstep by the butler.

Unfortunately, all this stuff went out of the window 20 years ago. Low-life demotic came sailing into the placid estuary of Novel Britannica in the mid-1980s. Scottish literature, in particular, with the notable exception of well-bred border types such as Allan Massie and Candia McWilliam, has been a riot of drugs, debauchery and "I'll chiv ye Jimmy cuz ahm oot ma heid y'ken?" since the publication of the Kelman, Alastair Gray and Agnes Owens triple-header *Lean Tales* back in 1985.

Trainspotting, Irvine Welsh's big smash of 1993, represented the end of the first phase of this movement – praised to the skies for its authenticity, street-cred and what-not – and *Porno*, a much fatter and more larksome affair, represents the end of its second phase.

Trainspotting? *Trainspotting* was a reel larf. The bit where Begbie chucked the pint glass over the pub balcony! The bit where the baby died! The bit where the taxi delivered an overdosing Renton to the hospital outpatients! Such a dramatic perspective on what our young people were up to on the backstreets of Leith induced the most delicious sensations in the breasts of literary London ("Who is this young man? We simply must interview him", etc, etc).

Irv got, and has continued to get, profiled simply everywhere. And yet what people tended to detect in him patently wasn't there. *Porno*, for example, which reassembles the earlier novel's cast around the twin poles of Begbie's quest for revenge on rip-off merchant Renton and Sick Boy's attempts to make a hard-core skin-flick entitled *Seven Rides for Seven Brothers*, is about as authentic as Sir Elton's hairpiece.

A validation of "real", demotic language as spoken by the great unwashed? Forget it. Just dandy at supplying endless Begbie-style monologues ("Ah'm fuckin well ragin", etc), Irv has a distressing habit, whenever the emotional temperature goes up a notch or two, of dropping into what can only be described as the Queen's English ("We try to talk, but finding the words is like digging for water in the desert.") You get the idea? Patois is for the smack-heads but anything remotely serious has to be rendered in the language of the enemy.

A member of which Irv has inevitably himself become. *Porno* is a quite wonderful demonstration of what George Melly 30 years ago defined as "the revolt into style", the inexorable process by which last year's hot young agitator becomes next year's scented sofa-lounger. There are lots of really *hilarious* jokes about shagging and porno-cinematography and, oh dear, comic misunderstandings over language – Begbie, for example, hearing that Spud has been "washing up" (apparently Leith slang for some kind of drug-fest) with his estranged wife, when, get this, *he really has been helping her with the washing up!* Lawks eh? It's a desperate shame Charles Hawtrey and Kenneth Williams died before they had the chance to make *Carry on Edinburgh Low Life*.

Formulaic – it ends up by reprising the *Trainspotting* scam – brandishing its apercus on contemporary consumer culture like a Hibs scarf, *Porno* has an even more disabling drawback: it is, of course, irretrievably middle-class. From a wider angle, this is one of the depressingly large number of novels that will get reviewed, read, praised and reviled for reasons that in 99 out of 100 cases have nothing to do with literature.

Meanwhile the raft of broadsheet commissioning editors currently falling over themselves to bring Irv's groovy thoughts on porn, drugs and Scotland to the printed page, might like to know that there are dozens of talented chaps out there, earning a thousandth of what Irv picks up and desperate for exposure. But, ay, who gies a fuck aboot them, eh?

Grin and bore it

The Road to McCarthy
Pete McCarthy
(Hodder & Stoughton, £17.99)

HAVING grown up in England, Pete McCarthy decided to exploit (sorry, explore) his Celtic roots by embarking on a glorified Hibernian pub crawl and then writing it up as a book. Quite why *McCarthy's Bar* (Sceptre, £6.99) has been such a runaway bestseller is a bit of a mystery.

The fact that it's got a picture on the front of a nun drinking Guinness outside the eponymous bar suggests something about the subtlety of observation on offer. The Irish like a drink. Most of them are Catholic. They're charming and friendly but a bit vague and illogical (don't try asking for road directions). Your fellow passengers on cheap flights and ferries are often rowdy and uncouth. But when you get there, sure, the craic will be mighty.

Add to this some stuff about the modern Celtic Tiger economy (all subsidised from Brussels), the fashion for continental food and drink (only with higher prices) and a few cheap remarks about funny foreigners (humourless Germans, camcording Koreans, the impenetrable menus in Chinese restaurants) and there you have it.

McCarthy has worked in broadcasting and his style owes much to the self-mocking, stand-up humour currently employed by arts and lifestyle programme presenters, afraid to alienate audiences by taking anything more than a tiny bit seriously. Thus a trip to some ancient standing stones (history, serious) is not complete without a long routine about being chased by a bull and falling into a cowpat. There's also a lot of the kind of sentences that end: "and that was just the..." or "especially after a few drinks".

The Road to McCarthy is an attempt to repeat the success. Unfortunately that's not all that gets repeated. What worked for the Haemorrhoid Ale will work just as well, he reckons, around the world. Once again there's a nun on the cover, but this time his search for McCarthy clan members (or, failing that, any old expat Irishman) takes in such far-flung locations as Morocco, Australia, the USA and that other so-called Emerald Isle (now more ashen), Montserrat. On the way he can't resist another go at Ireland, updating a story in the earlier book about a theme hotel near Cork and checking in to Dublin for a rugby match.

Once again, his travel-lite diversions are served with a heavy side order of utterly banal observations. People on aeroplanes often drink too much. Mobile phone users having private conversations loudly in public are embarrassing. Gibraltar is like England 30 years ago. There are more Irish in Liverpool and Manchester than in the whole of Ireland. Most Americans who claim to be Irish have never been near the place. Irish theme pubs are phony, as is all that shamrock 'n' shillelagh knick-knack paddywhack stuff (of which this is not, of course, the literary equivalent) but hey, isn't it great to celebrate St Patrick's Day, even if he did come from Wales. (Mind you, they do take it all a bit far in New York: I mean to say, green beer!)

"A sense of purpose occasionally has its place when travelling, but for the most part it's seriously overrated." That was McCarthy's approach in the first book; but this time round he's decided that the gimmick of looking for bars with his own name isn't quite enough. He goes to Tangier because he's heard that the self-proclaimed chief of his clan, the McCarthy Mor (not Moor as he first thought) has holed up there, incognito, after falling out with the Irish government over the sale of titles to gullible Americans. He wants to reach Tangier by sea, so flies to Gibraltar and takes a ferry: this allows him to pad out an extra chapter with some rude (and fortuitously topical) remarks about the Rock and its human and simian populations. In Tangier he is fleeced by local "guides" but eventually meets his man, who likes a drink or two and talks a lot of history. Afterwards McCarthy can't decide if the man is genuine or a fake. You wonder why he bothered.

Perhaps he is afraid of being

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
IT'S A TRAGEDY ARCHER'S LEAVING HARPERS - THEY KNEW HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF HIM
MACMILLAN DEAL
BUT HE FAILED TO PRODUCE 3 BOOKS
EXACTLY!

thought a fake himself. At a reading in New York he is shouted down for not sounding Irish enough. In Tasmania he meets a woman holding a copy of *McCarthy's Bar* but when he claims to be its author she thinks he's "a fackn' loony". Reading between his relentless attempts to be funny, one senses an insecurity about the validity of the whole enterprise. A loneliness, too, judging by the repeated references to "readers' wives' headboards".

Nevertheless he plods on, complaining about the hotels and dealing out little gobbets of historical research as he waits for yet another encounter with an eccentric or clan member or at least someone who can tell him a joke he can write down. When really stuck for copy he simply repeats odd stories from the local paper. After a while, the jokes wear thin and his take on the world becomes entirely predictable. Not all that original either, if one has read Peter Mayle, Bill Bryson et al.

It is a trite enough observation that travel writing is usually more about the traveller than the places travelled to, but this stuff more than bears it out. You can see something of the setting, behind the big cheesy grin, but not much. Sadly, it is the grin itself that seems to sell. How much longer can he keep it up?

Books & Bookmen

■ NEWS that Lord Archole has been sacked by his publisher, HarpicCollins, only to be picked up by Macmillan, raises several questions.

Is it right for a convicted criminal to negotiate a multi-million pound deal from his cell, even if it is done through the proxy of an agent, in this case Jonathan "the Poacher" Lloyd of Curtis Brown?

Does the timing of the announcement have anything to do with trying to distract the public from the humiliating £3m Archer has just had to repay the *Daily Star* and the *News of the World*? The original HarpicCollins deal was a £10m flat-fee royalties buyout, the kind of deal Archer began to favour from the moment his sales went into decline. Sales of his books fell from £522,000 in 1998 to £402,000 in 2001. The Macmillan deal – like the Harpic contract, for two novels and a collection of short stories – is understood to fall some way short of £10m (another humiliating repayment) but still enough to reimburse the wronged tabloids.

Why did HarperCollins lose interest in Archer's work, despite claiming to stand firmly by him when he went down in July 2001? Quite apart from delays in delivery and shrinking revenue, could it be anything to do with the fact that *Sons of Fortune*, the first book of the three covered by the deal, sounds like a tired retread of his own *Kane and Abel*, reprising as it does the old "twins separated at birth" schtick? The Macmillan deal includes Archersickofhim's backlist, so why does it need the same rubbish again?

But when will Archole find the time to honour the contract? Last week it was reported that he was to be allowed out of jail five days a week to work as a teaboy and scene-shifter at a theatre near his Lincolnshire prison for £60 a week. Presumably the grasping Lloyd isn't on 10 percent of these modest earnings.

■ MEANWHILE in Alex George's new novel *Love You Madly* (HarpicCollins), the book's anti-hero, a self-obsessed author, finds himself working in a bookshop to make ends meet. He spots a "middle-aged, intelligent-looking lady" browsing through a copy of his book, but she decides to buy a Jeffrey Archer paperback instead.

"This gave me some comfort," the solipsist rationalises. "She obviously wasn't as clever as she looked." A mild enough dig, but would even this have been countenanced in a HarperCollins book if the skids had not been under the house's one-time star author? Eddie "McBastard" Bell would not have taken the matter lightly.

■ PUBLISHERS have long been concerned at the degree to which Waterstone's uses its buying power to dictate punitive terms, but the chain may have pulled one stunt too many.

Just two months after flotation of the parent HMV Media business, Waterstone's began contacting publishers and trying to strong-arm them into a massive "dead stock swap", in which the chain hopes to exchange millions of pounds worth of unsold books for new titles. This might seem a perfectly fair and normal interpretation of the book trade's open-handed returns policy. It becomes less fair, however, when it emerges that most of the books in question are at least four years old, many being titles that wouldn't shift in the chain's recent well-publicised sales.

It is unclear if these books have been written off in the company's accounts or not. Either way, Waterstone's will have pulled a fast one. If the "dead" stock hasn't been written off, as it should have been in accordance with industry practice, the chain will have presented a false picture of its assets to investors at the time of flotation. If, however, it *has* been written off, Waterstone's will effectively be asking publishers to restock its stores for free – the "dead" stock having no financial value.

With publishers already paying hand over fist to get their titles into Waterstone's shop windows and "3-for-2" promotions (the logic: publishers pay the retailer to give them less money for selling more books), how long before something gives?

■ IT seems the issue with Jamie Byng, stepson of BT chairman Sir Christopher "Pigling" Bland, and his Edinburgh publishing house Canongate is not whether he will move the firm to London (see *Eyes passim*) but whether he'll continue to be involved with the company.

Ever since the planned takeover by US house Grove Atlantic was aborted a couple of years ago, it seems Byng has been trying to offload his stake in the company, albeit unsuccessfully.

This is not the only offloading the company is involved in. Subscribers to Canongate's internet mailing list have been offered the chance to buy a rare copy of the first edition of Michel Faber's novel *Under the Skin* – complete with plastic skin effect cover – for only £7.50. "Previously thought to be out of print, our warehouse has unexpectedly spat out 20 copies of the incredible edition," says the bulletin. Presumably this literary expectoration happened shortly after the same warehouse gobbed a vast quantity of the same "rare" item in the direction of Edinburgh record shop Fopp, which is flogging them off, alongside a great many other Canongate remainders, at £3 a go.

'Bookworm'

Pseuds Corner

I become the sacrifice. I become the building. I become the plane.

STEVEN BERKOFF tells the World Service how he will perform his poem 'Requiem for Ground Zero' at the Edinburgh Festival

When I say I read three or four newspapers a day, listen to Radio 4 in the morning and the BBC World Service at night, read two or three books each week, and chair a committee that campaigns for the rights of imprisoned prisoners in a dozen or so countries, people tend to look aghast. "How do you find the time?" they gasp.

JOAN SMITH
The Times

GOLDEN CHARGER PLATE
Our golden charger plate reflects the opulence that astonished visitors to Constantinople. Made from melamine, it will set off the colour of our Byzantine glass plate. For decorative use only. Not suitable for use with foodstuffs.

Past Times catalogue

I wrapped a ceramic teapot in a plastic bag and dropped it from my window, and I saw that I could select three pieces that would be enough to represent the entire curvature of the universe…

DANIEL LIBESKIND discusses his new Manchester Imperial War Museum, *Observer*

Dutton Forshaw are committed to continuously improve the level of service that is offered to our customers. Please tell us your experience.
Registration Number.....
Were you made to feel wanted and cared for when delivering and collecting your vehicle?

Issued by the Dutton Forshaw service centre

Pseuds Corporate

He (Rowan Williams) needs to get more customers – and get them to spend more. But how to effect the necessary internal change?

Apart from root-and-branch structural changes such as disestablishment or major re-organisation, he has the same three tools at his disposal as any CEO in effecting real culture change: leadership, reward/recognition and, of course, communication.

DAWN JAMES of Weber Shandwick advises the new Archbishop of Canterbury in a letter to *PR Week*

Developing a shared framework for health professional learning beyond registration
I believe the shared framework needs to…
…be flexible enough to allow for localised and individual adaptation but still allow for transferability by identifying a recommended credit currency to carry uniprofessional pathways as well as interprofessional and care group models.

PROFESSOR MAGGIE PEARSON,
Deputy Director of Human Resources,
Department of Health, internal memo

CONTRIBUTORS: Matt Gil, Graham Fallowes, Margaret Whitaker, Joseph Place, Rick Collet, Tim Read, A. Non.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

RED DAWN OVER BERMUDA

NO MEMBER of the government is tougher on tax avoidance than the Rt Hon "Red" Dawn Primarolo, paymaster-general.

Dawn chairs a Europe-wide committee to expose and hound the world's tax havens, and is continually boasting of the government's efforts to beat worldwide tax avoidance. In June 2000, she said: "The UK will continue to be at the forefront of initiatives to develop new global standards... to combat international tax fraud, evasion and avoidance."

Dawn Primarolo

If the *Eye* goes on publishing material on the subject, perhaps someone in Dawn's office will one day draw her attention to the greatest tax avoidance scandal of them all: one for which the Inland Revenue and her office are responsible. This is the sale of many hundreds of buildings and property owned by the tax authorities in Britain to international speculators based in tax havens. The minister responsible to parliament for the Inland Revenue? Er, Dawn Primarolo.

On 5 November 2000 entrepreneurial Tory MP Christopher Chope asked the chancellor "on what date the contract between his department and Mapeley Ltd was concluded for the strategic transfer to Mapeley Ltd of the ownership and management of the combine estate of the Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise and if he will place a copy of the contract in the library".

Red Dawn replied on Gordon Brown's behalf: "The Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise are working with Mapeley to finalise the details of the STEPS (Strategic Transfer of the Estate to the Private Sector) contract." In her answer and in a similar exchange on 23 January 2001, Primarolo did not contradict Mr Chope's assertion that the sale of the estate was to Mapeley Ltd, a British-registered company.

Some weeks later, came the lie direct. On 9 March 2001 the Inland Revenue issued a press release announcing the signature of a contract to sell its buildings, and those of Customs, on 2 April. It stated: "Under the terms of the STEPS contract, the ownership and management of the estate transfers to Mapeley Ltd who are required to provide the departments with serviced accommodation over 20 years." This assertion can now be tested against the 2001 accounts of Mapeley Ltd, recently filed at Companies House. Strikingly absent from these accounts is any reference to the purchase of about 600 buildings from the tax authorities or to the ownership of such a huge estate. Indeed, the only assets acquired by the company in all of 2001 is machinery worth a trifling £1m.

A rather different picture emerges from the accounts of another company – Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd – submitted at the same time. This company has a more substantial interest in the Inland Revenue property. In the last nine months of 2001, the accounts reveal, £136m worth of rents were received by the company from the Inland Revenue and Customs. Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd, like Mapeley Ltd, is registered in Britain. But wait. What happened to all that rent? According to the accounts, it all vanished in "operating costs", leaving the company with an overall loss of £12m, on which of course it pays no tax. What exactly are these operating costs? £108m of them are described as "property rentals", of which £81m were "master lease rentals invoiced by Mapeley Steps Ltd".

What do the accounts of Mapeley Steps Ltd have to tell us about this huge income from master lease rentals? Nothing. Because Mapeley Steps Ltd, unlike Mapeley Ltd and Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd, is not registered in Britain. All we have is its address: 44 Church Street, Hamilton, Bermuda.

As the *Eye* has often insisted, Bermuda is one of the world's most blatant tax havens. So of the £136m in rent paid by the Inland Revenue and Customs to Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd, a handsome £81m went to a company in Bermuda. It follows that the ownership of the Inland Revenue buildings is not, as the Revenue pretended last year, with British companies but with a company of a similar name in Bermuda, where it can easily escape any obligation to pay tax.

This is only the start of the process. The buildings were sold under a private finance initiative (PFI) deal which lasts 20 years. Like other PFI deals, the financial details are secret. Red Dawn Primarolo did not accede to Mr Chope's modest request to put a copy of the original contract in the Commons library. But the Mapeley Steps Contractor accounts show "annual commitments under non-cancellable operating leases of £125m". Most, if not all, of these commitments will be the money the company is committed to pay to the Bermuda company under the master leases.

Even if only £100m of this is transferred to the tax haven, this means that, at today's prices, after 20 years, £2bn will be coughed up by the tax authorities in rent for the buildings they themselves have sold – and will end up in a tax haven. The beneficiaries of all this largesse are the shareholders in Mapeley's parent company: George Soros, James Ritblat, Fortress Investments and other notorious tax avoiders over the world.

FREE AT LAST

AFTER 24 years in jail for lighting a fire that he put out himself, David Blagden has finally been freed by the parole board despite the home office's efforts to keep him locked up.

Everyone accepts that it was a desperate cry for help which prompted Blagden to set fire to some church curtains after his adoptive parents had both died within weeks of each other. After he put out the flames, he called the police and waited to be arrested.

Because psychiatrists couldn't agree on his mental state, Blagden was jailed on a discretionary life sentence. Grotesquely, he has served longer than murderers, rapists and terrorists – despite pleas from his Oxford community, MPs, lawyers and the vicar whose church was damaged to the tune of £1,200.

Blagden is not a risk to society; and his crime had no victim. His MP, Paul Stinchcombe, wrote: "Words are inadequate to express my sense of outrage that my country can imprison a man for so long for this offence committed in these circumstances. I believe that it is barely believable – and wholly unconscionable – that David has been in custody for so long."

The prison service though remained determined to hang on him because Blagden, perhaps not surprisingly after such long incarceration, kept going awol. Let out on day release he would panic and initially fail to return. Even though he presented no danger, his inability to abide by the rules rankled those in authority and his parole applications have been repeatedly turned down – until last week.

Initially it looked like the hearing would go the same way as the others with the home office and probation service asking for another six months incarceration so Blagden could acquire some "enhanced thinking skills". Fortunately the parole board finally accepted that the last place anybody is going to enhance their thinking is in jail.

GRID IS GOOD

THE pending merger of the National Grid company (aka National Greed) and Transco means consumers in England and Wales will get all their gas and electricity via a single private monopoly.

National Grid has already reduced its core business in the UK to a minor part of its vast international operations, and concentrates on piling up bigger profits abroad. The government, despite its "golden share" in National Greed, seems not to care two hoots about its strategy.

A recent *Eye* revealed the contrast between the massive profits made by National Greed in transmitting electricity as a private monopoly in this country, and the monstrous losses made on its speculative investments abroad. Yet the company seems determined to further expand its overseas operations on the back of profits made in Britain.

Since the company was formed in 1990, it has invested £3000m in its UK business but in only a few years has put three times that much (£9000m) into its acquisitions in the US. Only two of the company's nine directors have any previous experience with the electricity transmission business. And only one of those was concerned with the UK. The rapidly-changing pattern of National Greed's activities suggests that its directors are primarily concerned to make profits from investments abroad, including South America, where, in the tactful phrase of the *Financial Times* last November, National Greed "came unstuck" to the tune of £290m. Prospects for the gas and electricity industries in the US, meanwhile, have become highly uncertain in the wake of the collapse of Enron.

Transco distributes gas to most British consumers under the aegis of the Lattice Group, hived off from British Gas in 1999. Transco directors have shown some concern about a possible conflict of interest between their regulated activities in Britain and speculative investment for profit elsewhere. They have even tentatively suggested that their monopolistic British operations should be transferred to a "not for profit" company such as the one now taking over from the failed Railtrack plc.

The proposed merger with National Greed will instantly dispose of such a rational solution. After the merger, the board of the merged company will be free to concentrate on investment overseas every bit as recklessly as National Greed has done. The result could prove disastrous for the security of supply to gas and electricity consumers in Britain.

Even OFGEM, the market-fixated regulator of the two industries, has recognised the dangers to security of the country's supply if the managerial resources and investment funds of the new National Grid Transco plc are diverted to activities "in other areas, in particular the US". But the government does not seem too worried. On 2 July trade and industry secretary Patricia Hewitt "cleared" the Transco-National Greed merger without conditions. The creation of this new and dangerous private monopoly will not even be referred to the competition commission.

Energy minister Brian Wilson, once a rabid nationaliser, seems content to leave the merger alone. Perhaps the earnest MPs on the Commons trade and industry select committee who reported at length last February on other aspects of the security of British energy supplies, should ask a question or two.

WHAT A TEES!

THE expressions of shock and horror from MPs on the public accounts committee (PAC) over the activities of the long unlamented Teesside development corporation (TDC) will have come as no surprise to *Eye* readers.

We've been banging on about the TDC since October 1998 (*Eye* 961). We reported the strenuous and for a long time futile efforts of Middlesbrough South Labour MP Ashok Kumar to expose the multiple misdeeds of the corporation, and his eventual triumph in getting the matter properly investigated and exposed by the national audit office (NAO).

The resulting PAC report, just published, denounces the TDC for, among many other things, "not showing greater regard to the principles of proper conduct of public business"; for conveniently losing vital documents; and for leaving a debt of up to £40m. It reserved special criticism for former chief executive Duncan Hall, who, despite a regular annual bonus of 10 percent, "did not discharge his responsibilities as accounting officer in an adequate manner"; and for the relevant government department which "failed to take rigorous and timely action" as the multiple horrors emerged.

Teesside revisited: John Major and friend

The TDC was the largest of 12 urban development councils set up under Margaret Thatcher. They were intended to solve the problem of the inner cities whose populations had so insultingly refused to vote Tory in the 1987 general election. The exciting idea was to take away the planning powers of elected local councils and hand them to appointed Tory businessmen and accountants freed from cloying Labour bureaucracies. Thus liberated, it was argued, the corporations would "regenerate" the inner cities. To emphasis her commitment to the north-east, Margaret Thatcher went on a highly televised walk through Teesside scrubland. In 1997, when Teesside was "regenerated" by its development corporation, she was joined on the same walk by her successor as prime minister, John Major.

Now, five years later, we find out how much taxpayers have had to pay for this regeneration, a catalogue of dubious financial practises and favouritism which shocked all the MPs on the committee, including chairman Edward Leigh, Tory MP for Gainsborough, once an ardent Thatcherite.

The catalogue included a payment of £1.6m to developers for a development that never, er, developed; the payment of £650,000 to other businessmen on the day the TDC was wound up; and the handing over of a stadium to Middlesbrough football club at a peppercorn rent after surveyors were instructed to value it as though it were contaminated and unreclaimed when it had just been decontaminated and reclaimed. Basic rules of accountancy were studiously flouted.

The wretched Duncan Hall, chief executive of the TDC, and Sir Richard "Fucked" Mottram, permanent secretary at the DLTR, had a dreadful time under interrogation by the MPs. The other members of the TDC board got off relatively lightly. Yet the report makes it plain that the board as a whole was responsible for the calamity. The other members included three names now associated with "new" Labour.

- Lord (Jack) Dormand, once Labour MP for Easington, whose family has always been close to that of Hilary Armstrong, "new" Labour's minister of state at the DETR when Ashok Kumar was asking questions about the TDC.
- Alan Cherry, later chairman of Countryside Properties, which made most of its money (and millions for Mr Cherry) through property development, estate agency and speculation mainly in Essex. Mr Cherry is a "new" Labour favourite.
- Mike Carr, former Labour leader of Middlesbrough council, who has now been appointed as a member of the cabinet of the newly-elected mayor of Middlesbrough, Ray Mallon. Mr Carr's special responsibilities are culture, leisure and, er, here we go again, regeneration.

PRISON SERVICE

No Leg To Stand On

THE shocking case of paraplegic prisoner Roger Zoppola who was forced to use his bed in London's Pentonville prison as a lavatory because his cell door was too narrow for him to get his wheelchair in and out, is not unique, it seems.

The Howard League for Penal Reform set up a special disability forum earlier this year after hearing a series of disturbing cases. These include:

- An inmate with amputated legs who had to drag himself up and down stairs. He was only moved to a more suitable prison after threatening, like Zoppola, to initiate court action.
- An inmate who was unable to walk and was held in a cockroach-infested cell on the ground floor because there was no disabled access to refurbished cells on upper floors.
- A blind prisoner who was taunted by officers who thought he was feigning blindness.
- A deaf prisoner who was denied a place on the sex offender treatment programme because there was no one to sign for him.
- A prisoner with a muscle wasting disease who had to drag himself across the floors of security company vans while being transported between jails.

There was of course the horrific case before the European court of human rights last year of Thalidomide victim Adele Price, who has severe arm and leg abnormalities as well as kidney problems, and was locked up for a week for contempt in a civil case of debt.

The European judges said her treatment bordered on "torture". "In a civilised country like the United Kingdom, society considers it not only appropriate but a basic humane concern to try and ameliorate and compensate for the disabilities faced by a person."

But the prison service doesn't seem to have learnt from the judgment if 47-year-old Zoppola is anything to go by. His lawyer Chez Cotton, of Hickman and Rose, was repeatedly denied access to her client by Pentonville staff who actually hid Zoppola from both her and members of the Howard disability forum.

The prison service is committed to opening up all services to immobile or impaired inmates by 2004. But even when jails install lavatories and lifts for the disabled – at no small cost – they get it profoundly wrong. The disability group which visited Pentonville found one specially adapted toilet – but it was in a chapel which could only be reached by climbing a narrow staircase. And the one lift for the disabled could not be used by anyone in a wheelchair because the security gate was too narrow.

WILD ABOUT BARRY

BARRY Reamsbottom, former general-secretary of the now defunct civil service union CPSA, was not in court in July for an important case. His resourceful lawyers argued that the election for general-secretary of the newly-merged union PCS should be set aside and that Barry Reamsbottom should be declared its rightful general-secretary even though he had not even stood in the election; had signed an undertaking to step down as joint general-secretary of the new union in place of the winner of a new election; and that Mark Serwotka, the left-wing candidate, had been elected general-secretary by a substantial majority.

Mr Reamsbottom's claims were comprehensively rejected by senior judge, Vice-Chancellor Sir Andrew Morritt. He upheld the election of Mark Serwotka and concluded that Mr Reamsbottom had no standing as a union official.

So how on earth could this case ever have been brought? One clue came in an article from the *Economist* on 11 April: "Mr Blair's main hope that the left may not consolidate its hold hangs on the outcome of the biennial national executive committee elections, due on April 25th. If the moderates win, the plan is to keep Barry Reamsbottom, the outgoing general-secretary and a moderate, in the job until 2004, and sideline Mr Serwotka." That is exactly what happened. Blairite "moderates" narrowly won the executive elections, and Mr Reamsbottom blandly announced that he was staying on as general-secretary until 2004, and that the elected Mark Serwotka would be eased out of office.

On 5 July the website Labournet noted the vindication of the "plan" exposed in the *Economist* and asked: "Whose plan was it?" By way of an answer, it published a remarkable circular issued a week after the *Economist* article by Peter Robinson, director of the Trade Union Committee for European and Transatlantic Understanding (TUCETU). TUCETU's main aim is to maintain right-wing control of the trade unions. Its vice presidents are Sir Ken Jackson (recently defeated general secretary of Amicus, the engineering union); his predecessor in that post Lord (William) Jordan; Doug McAvoy, general-secretary of the National Union of Teachers; and Barry Reamsbottom. Mr Robinson's circular noted: "Barry's moderate group in the PCS is endeavouring to secure a majority in the current executive elections. As TUCETU's vice presidents it is important that we give them both as much support as we can." In the event Jackson lost the election and Reamsbottom was humiliated in court.

What will Barry do now? His court defeat gives him more time to carry on his unpaid work for the speaker of the Commons, Michael Martin MP. Somewhat sceptical of the notion that a leading full-time trade union official should be working in the speaker's office, the *Eye* wrote to Mr Martin asking about it. The reply came from John Stonborough, a former television journalist whose public relations company has had many political assignments, some of them recorded in the *Eye*.

Mr Stonborough said he spoke for the speaker's commission. Mr Speaker Martin, he explained, and Mr Reamsbottom were "old mates" and after Mr Martin's election in 2000 his mate Barry had been helping him with his constituency work.

Reamsbottom had a desk in the speaker's house and a pass into the House of Commons, but he hadn't been paid a penny for his labours. Mr Stonborough insisted there was "nothing sinister" about the arrangement, though he could not help the *Eye* as to any reason why so senior a trade union official should be doing such apparently humdrum work for the speaker.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

TRADE secretary Patricia Hewitt, no doubt conscious of her once close ties to the Andersen empire, is keen to suggest post-Enron and WorldCom that "new" Labour plans a tough new world for rogue, negligent or incompetent bean-counters.

If that is anything more than just knee-jerk political rhetoric, Hewitt and junior treasury minister Ruth Kelly really should denounce the shabby trick Ernst & Young is trying to pull to stall into irrelevance and history the proposed disciplinary inquiry into its role in the Equitable Life scandal.

E&Y, headed by Nick Land, has asked the high court to delay the planned investigation by accountancy's Joint Disciplinary Scheme (JDS) into its role as Equitable's auditor until after the civil action brought by the stricken insurer is resolved. Equitable sued its former auditor last April for up to £2.6bn for failing to spot and stop the guaranteed annuity rate (GAR) "black hole" which has brought the world's oldest insurer to virtual insolvency.

E&Y has a lot of explaining to do as the moment in 2000 Equitable lost its case over the GAR policies, it was bust – despite never alerting policyholder owners to that terminal bonus. The auditor never objected to the misleading if not mendacious statements made in successive Equitable accounts about the GAR liability, culminating only months before the law lords' ruling that the maximum extra cost was comfortably covered by a £200m provision.

For 1999, the year before the GAR bomb went off and blew Equitable away, E&Y was paid £1.6m by Equitable. No less than £1.1m of that was for non-audit services, no doubt related to the GAR issue. The previous year that non-audit fee had been just £118,000. The audit fee rose from £386,000 to £467,000.

During the six years from 1994 that the GAR issue was on the mutual's boardroom table, E&Y was paid more than £4m in fees. Approaching £2m of that was for auditing the society's books, which contained the GAR time bomb. Nick Land and his fellow senior partners would have benefited from that bonanza.

Now Land tries to justify a cynical delaying tactic designed to ensure the firm faces no professional punishment before he and those responsible exit to a comfortable retirement – something many Equitable policyholders will not now enjoy – by assuring E&Y will of course "co-operate fully with the JDS after the civil proceedings". To do so before would be unfair and unjust because it would "prejudice our defence of the civil claim".

These honeyed words disguise a bitter truth of which Land and E&Y are only too aware. If the JDS inquiry – which has barely started and is likely to wait on the government-appointed Penrose report into Equitable due next year – and its findings plus likely fines and other punishments can be delayed until after the Equitable case is resolved, it could be 10 years before E&Y has to answer to its professional regulator for what went wrong. That way no damaging finding by JDS experts will be able to influence the verdict of an inexpert high court judge and perhaps force a settlement.

An exaggeration? Consider the JDS record. Only this year it passed sentence on Coopers & Lybrand for its failings in auditing Barings which crashed in 1995. It took from 1991 until 1999 for Coopers to be fined over the Maxwell scandal. Although Polly Peck collapsed in 1990, 12 years later its auditor Stoy Hayward has still not been judged by the JDS.

Justice delayed is justice denied; but for accountants justice delayed is justice avoided. In the Maxwell and Polly Peck cases some of the guilty bean-counters were dead before the JDS reached its verdict. Others had already retired. Meanwhile the firm continues earning fees, its reputation unsullied by any finding of negligence or incompetence.

The greatest example of this failure of self-regulation, conspired at by the courts, concerns the Bank of Credit & Commerce International which was closed down by regulators in 1991 revealing a $13bn hole in the accounts. So far the JDS has not even been able to complete its investigation of Price Waterhouse over its role in failing over four years to detect the massive and institutionalised fraud within the Bank of Cocaine & Conmen International – thanks to the delaying tactics employed by what is now PricewaterhouseCoopers and its lawyers.

But then the BCCI liquidators have still not been able to get the Bank of England into court for its negligence as regulator. That £1bn case may be heard next year – 12 years after the collapse!

BCCI set the pattern for how accountants exposed by a scandal they themselves failed to expose thwart the regulatory process established to police their profession. Given that the collapse is certain to launch civil and probably criminal actions, the first move is to claim that any disciplinary proceedings would prejudge those cases and handicap their defence by forcing the disclosure of documents and the making of witness statements. As the Serious Farce Office and the English courts are incapable of doing anything quickly – consider that Andersen was investigated, tried and convicted within eight months of Enron's collapse – this alone ensures years of respite.

In this the accountants have been loyally supported by certain judges who have been only too quick to agree that the public interest in expediting the regulation of bad auditors was far less important than what happens in court.

In 1993 three appeal court judges halted the JDS investigation of Price Waterhouse's role in BCCI as prejudicial and unfair because of the pending $3bn civil claim from the bank's liquidators. Price Waterhouse's then senior partner Ian Brindle read from the same script now used by Nick Land.

The appeal court, over-ruling two earlier decisions, declared it was not in the public interest to have the JDS investigation proceed before the civil case was decided even though that was years away. That would be "unhelpful" for the auditor of BCCI. Showing a naivete judges today could not justify, the appeal court felt there would be "positive advantages" in the JDS having the "assistance" of a verdict in the civil case. They refused to accept the reality that this could take years. The judges also felt the JDS had shown that self-regulation had worked and the public interest had been served by starting an investigation even if it took years to come to a conclusion.

The JDS failed to persuade the law lords to overturn this nonsense and so every guilty bean-counter since 1993 has played that same card. Coopers tried and failed with Maxwell after the high court ruled in 1994 that it was in the public interest for the JDS to do its job. "The question should be addressed promptly and its resolution should not await and be dependent on the final resolution of civil proceedings which may be some years off," declared Lord Justice Henry of Guinness and the now Lord Justice Kay. That should be the response over Equitable.

For even when civil proceedings end, the guilty still seek to avoid professional punishment by new delaying tactics. Coopers settled the Maxwell case in 1995 but it was four years before it was fined £1.2m by the JDS after an inquiry, initial tribunal hearing and appeal. Stoy Hayward settled with the Polly Peck liquidators in 1998. Four years on there has not even been a tribunal hearing. Coopers deliberately delayed the JDS hearing and the appeal, buying time for a settlement of the Barings civil case. It was desperate to avoid the inevitable finding against the firm being published before it had settled. This duly happened after the appeal last September.

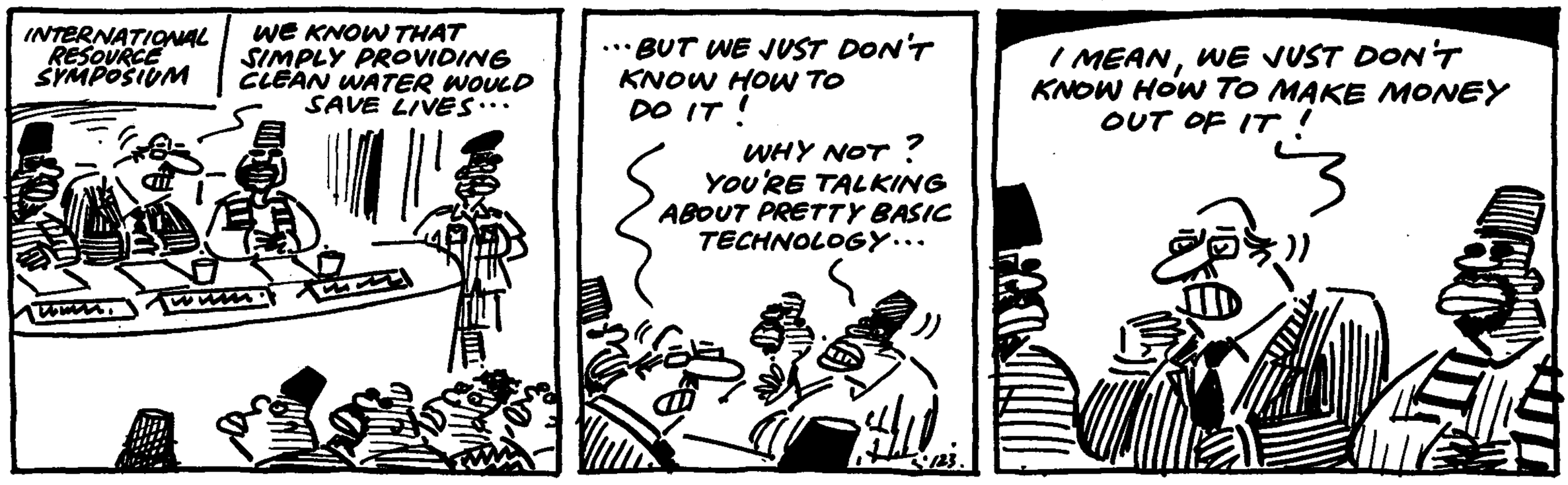
PW settled with the BCCI liquidators in 1998 paying $95m but without admitting liability. There was no verdict to be of "assistance" as expected by the appeal court. So the JDS still had it all to do. The payment was explained as a commercial decision to save legal costs.

Four years on the regulators are still struggling. Firstly PW claimed that Cayman Island confidentiality laws prevented it providing documents to the regulator. The major criminality inside BCCI took place within the Cayman-based BCCI (Overseas) bank. This required a ruling by the Cayman authorities that the documents could be handed over. Then PW insisted that banking act confidentiality precluded cooperation with the investigation. This spurious device has also been dismissed; but it all takes time which is on the side of those to blame and their protectors.

So 11 years after BCCI crashed, five years after the last trial and four years after the civil settlement, not a single PW auditor has even been interviewed by the JDS. Very few of those directly involved are any longer at PwC. Ian Brindle

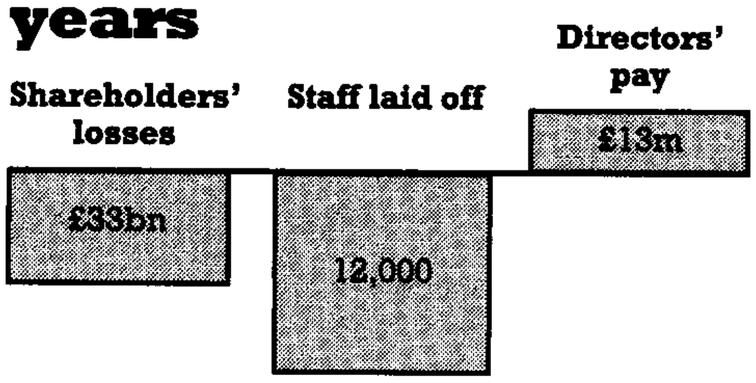
THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG


INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE SYMPOSIUM
WE KNOW THAT SIMPLY PROVIDING CLEAN WATER WOULD SAVE LIVES…
…BUT WE JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO IT!
WHY NOT? YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT PRETTY BASIC TECHNOLOGY…
I MEAN, WE JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE MONEY OUT OF IT!

Stock Horror

Marconi winners and losers over two years



retired last year and is now somewhat embarrassingly deputy chairman of the Financial Reporting Review Panel. You could not make that up! Two key PW auditors in the Caymans suspected of corruption have escaped all punishment. One is now… a local lawyer!

It is unlikely that the BCCI tribunal will sit in judgment on PW before next year at the earliest. Allowing for the inevitable appeals, no ruling is expected before 2004 on events that happened up to 1991! Unless the Department of Timidity & Inaction and the treasury want the same thing to happen at Equitable – and they may do given their own failures of regulation – they should make it clear that this is not acceptable in the post-Enron era and not in the public interest. What has happened with BCCI and may happen with Equitable is not self-regulation but no regulation.

PS. PwC is now advising Equitable on its action against Ernst & Young.

THE June issue of *Harrodian Gazette*, featuring the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed on the cover, contains an interesting article entitled "Safe as Houses" about the Harrods safe deposit centre "still as impenetrable as ever". A view not shared by Mr Justice Cresswell last week in finding that Fayed has not been wrongly arrested for the burglarising of the safe deposit box belonging to his rival "Tiny" Rowland. Or even by Fayed himself, who in 2000 paid £1.4m to Rowland's widow in settlement for the inside job.

THE SFO has decided to take an interest in the collapse of the Imperial Consolidated fund management group which threatens to cost investors (mostly outside the UK) at least half of the £210m lured by high interest rates. Inquiries are already under way by Lincolnshire police, the National Criminal Intelligence Service and the authorities in Grenada and the British Virgin islands.

Imperial's assets are notionally divided between a loan book and investments in an Argentinian mining venture. Investigators believe it will be surprising if these produce half of the £220m book value. Many of the assets appear to be little more than book entries disguising the transfer of money to other ventures linked to the group's founders, Jared Brook and former bankrupt Lincoln Fraser. Both men are barred from being directors following an earlier company crash.

Last week administrator Philip Lyon of accountants Mazars Neville Russell obtained a worldwide freeze order on Brook and Fraser's assets, plus those of several companies with which they continue to be involved. These are suggested to include a new property fund run by Property International based in the BVI but run from the UK and Spain with accounts at the Bank of Scotland.

'Henry Slicker & Associates'

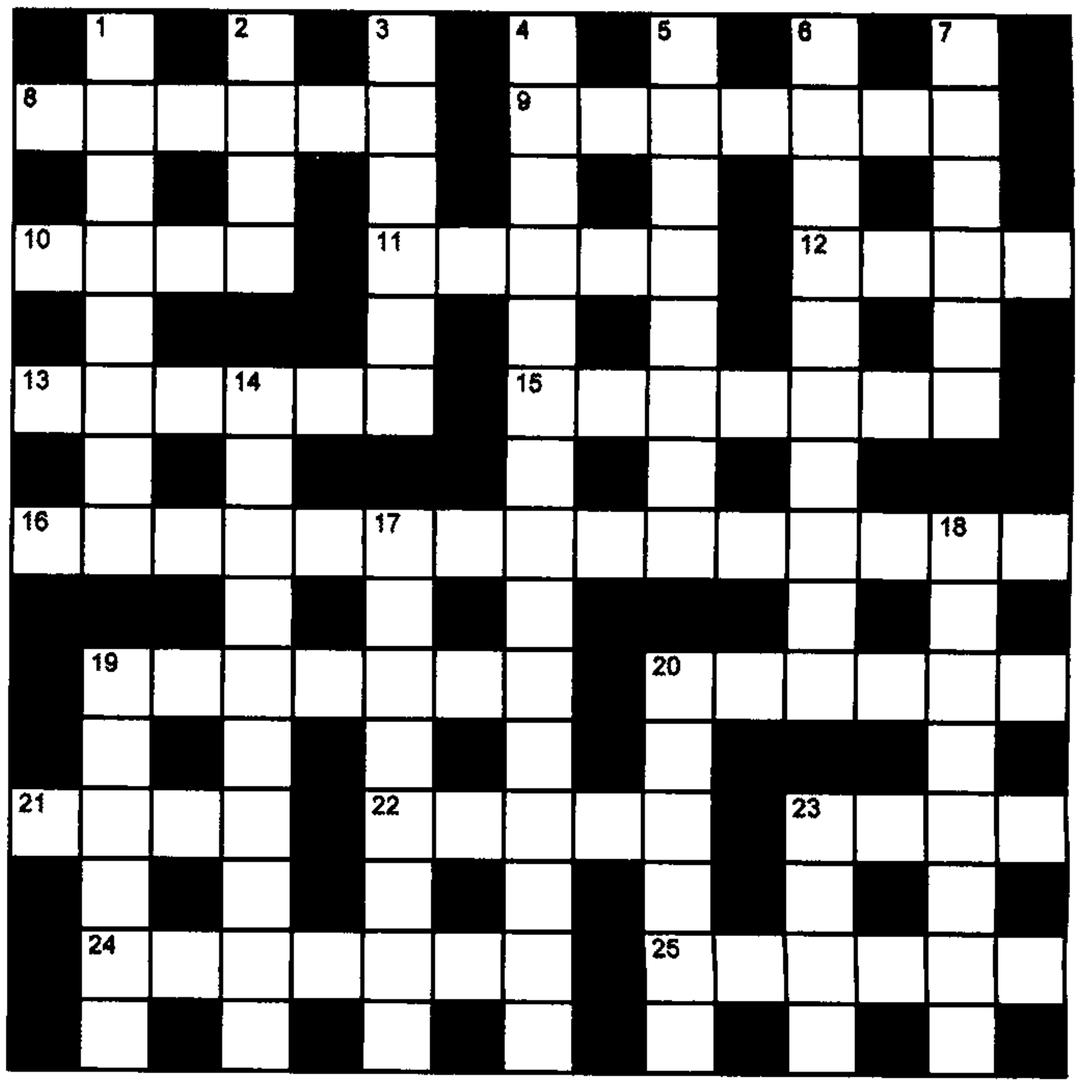
■ Concern over unsafe sexual practices

GP practices are performing well

The Cornishman

EYE CROSSWORD 216

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 30 August 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

8 Not nude having made a shift? (2,4)

9 Dramatist takes cheek and cleavage to mouth (7)

10 Boast going topless (4)

11 Unbelievable plot to involve *Yes* in stink (5)

12/15 Get to the opera house around one (4,3,4)

13 Safety margin for evasive customer back on habit (6)

15 See 12

16 Declining magazine's just dumping its head — *Observer*'s warning about habitual tendency to 24/25 etc.? (7,8)

19 No escaping 'Fascist Gob's' astral arc (7)

20 Prison game: getting arse over tip after cold drink (6)

21 First sign of fourth gear (4)

22 Pointless lovemaking with endless battery component application (5)

23 Blair, now he's 'Right' rather than 'New', politically? (4)

24/25 Sell article on indiscriminate lover's caper (4,3,6)

DOWN

1 Private had an orgasm in rain storm (2,6)

2 About to up-end and penetrate ex-president shortly? F-off! (4)

3 Bend over heartless sexual partner playfully (6)

4 Keen to get involved with Hitchcock, eh? (5,3,7)

5 Be the first to show Blair's at end of tenure (8)

6 Whipping ... on some clothes? (10)

7 Elector upset humourless Brown with "Tony's leader!" (6)

14 Gushing Blair not quite finished? Should get the boot! (10)

17 Induce revulsion with "Youthful Blair rises to embrace constituency" (8)

18 Clearance needed for nut's oral sex study? (8)

19 On Anthony's first date cleavage proves to be purposeless (6)

20 The well known key to Lee's mangled, emptied balls (6)

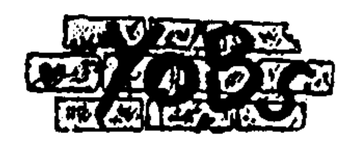
23 Makes a contribution to Rigoletto's sex-change (4)

Crossword 215 winner: ROB FALCONER

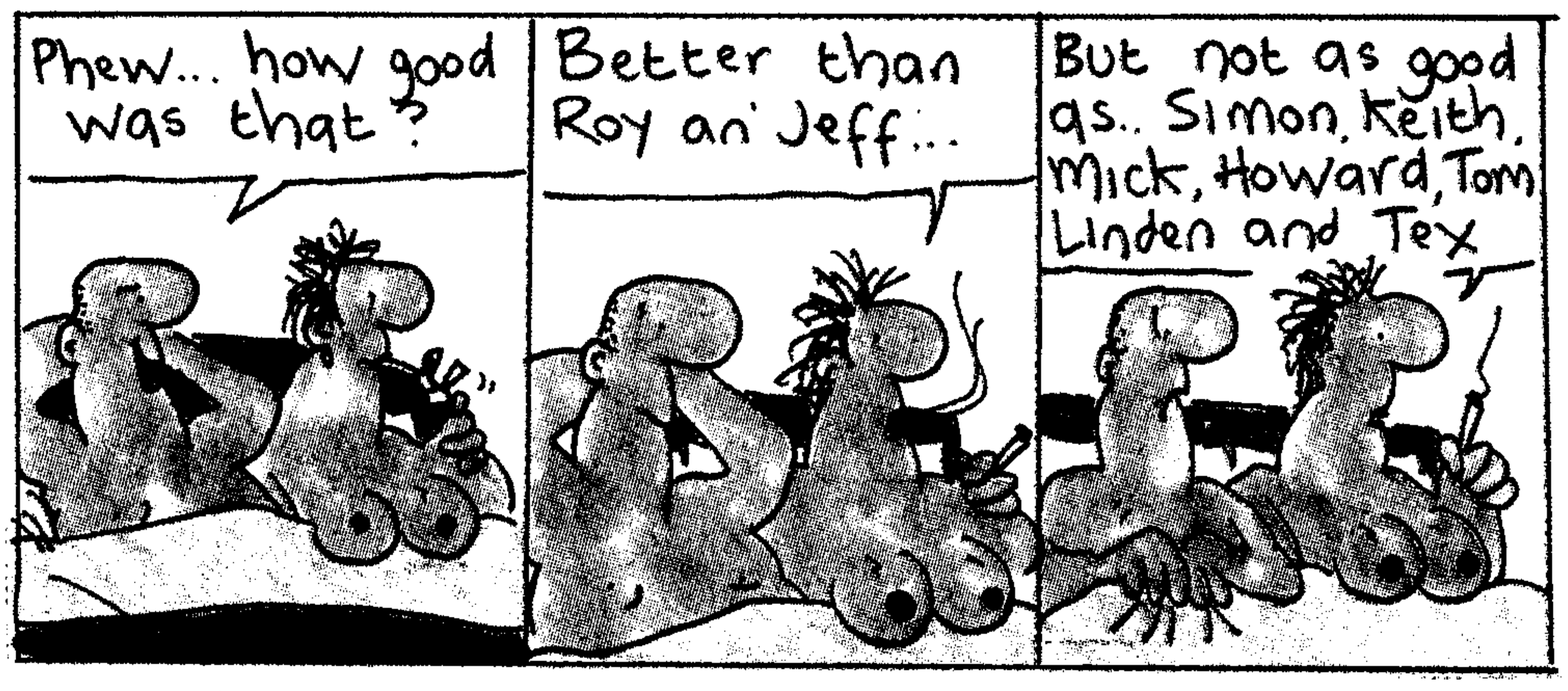
Solution to Crossword 215

ACROSS: 1/4 John Prescott 9 Fistful 10/24D Gagging for it 12 Ear-bashed 13 Angel 14 Hegel 15 Ripped off 18 Manifesto 20 Skimp 22 Gouda 24 Fat chance 25 Pitcher 26 Sausage 27 Garrotte 28 Kith.

DOWN: 2 Oestrogen 3 Naff all 4 Pilchards 5 Egged 6 Cognate 7 Thing 8 Afresh 11 G-clef 16 Poor taste 17 Onion tart 18 Mug up 19 Flasher 20 Schmuck 21 Peeler 23 Ultra.



HUSBAND



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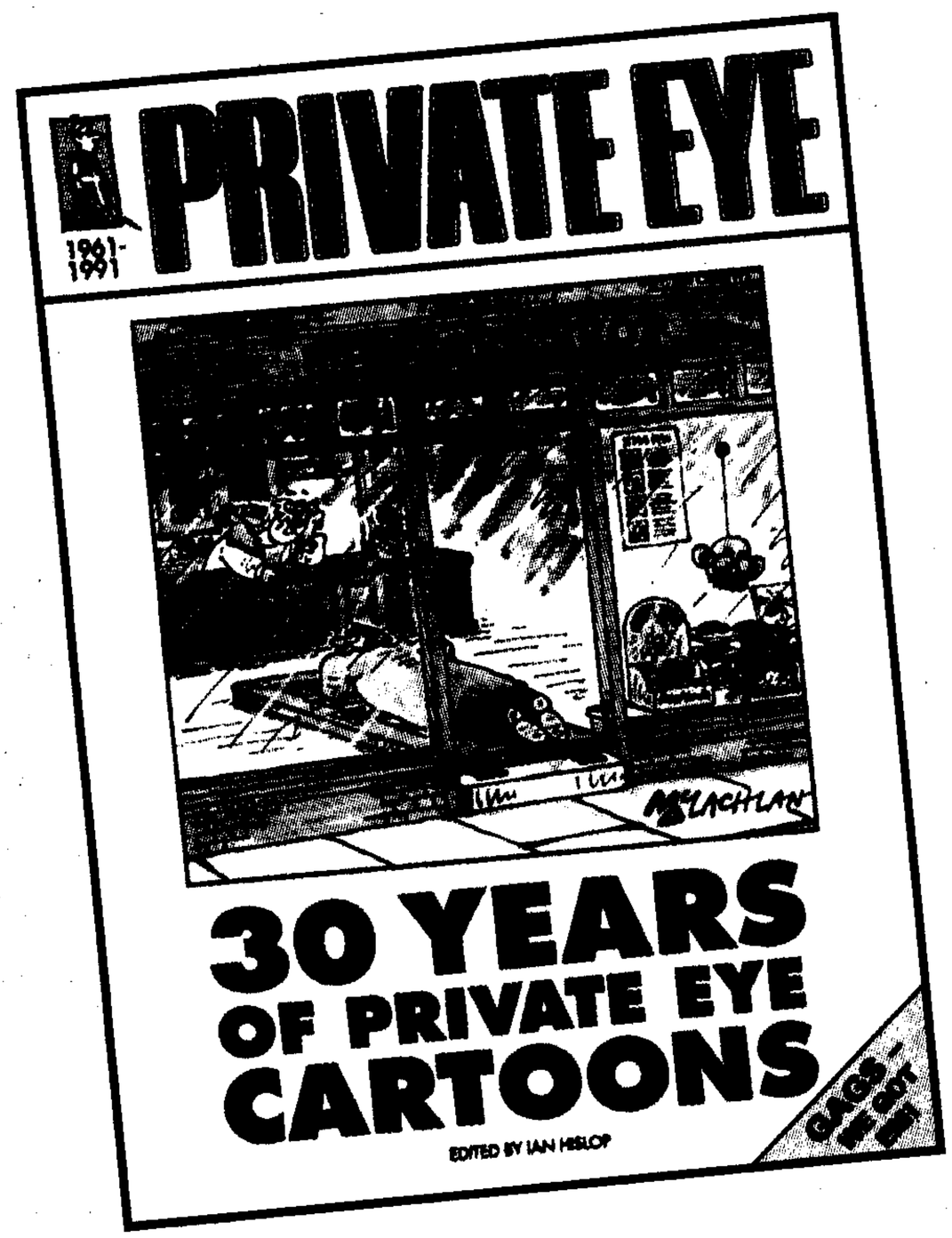

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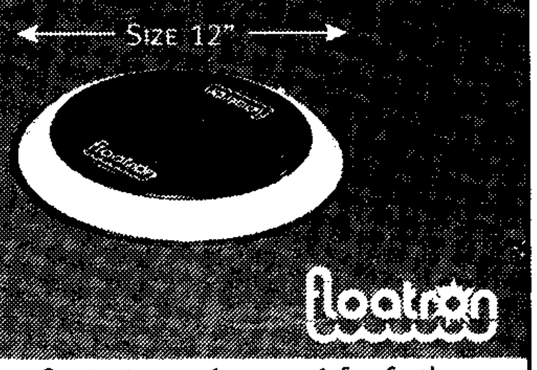

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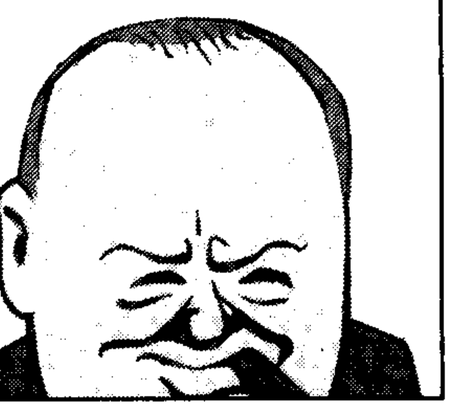

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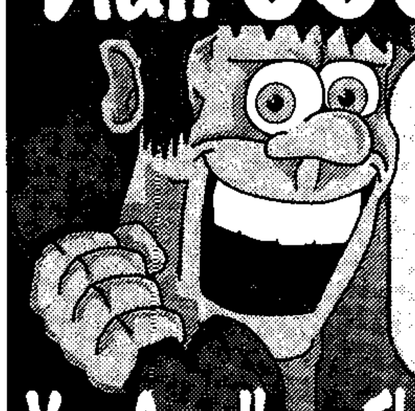

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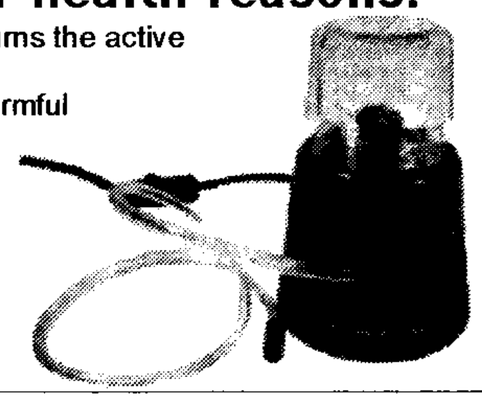

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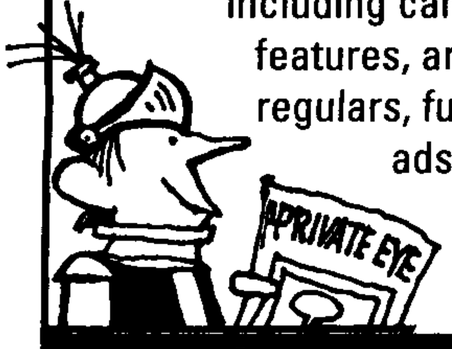

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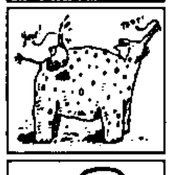

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Replying to a
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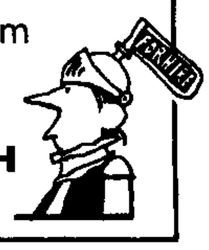
Smalls box number?
Address your reply like this:

Box No...
PRIVATE EYE
Communications Team
Exmouth House
3-11 Pine Street
LONDON EC1R OJH



COCAINE ADDICTION. Discreet private treatment, individual non residential programmes. 020 7291 4554 for a sympathetic chat.

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EYE SEEK

KING SEEKS QUEEN for late-night culinary and pharmaceutical indulgences. I'll see you at the end of Lonely Street. Thank you, baby. Call 'WHO'S IN THE BAG?: 0800 389 4748.

EYE CONTACT

MUSIC LOVERS – Classical Partners. Introductions, Musical Events – Nationwide. 01707 601315 www.classicalpartners.co.uk

CHAT ROOM 25p/min. 100+ girls online 24hrs. JCG, tn219dz, 09062 765 264.

THAI CONNECTION – Thailand's oldest agency celebrates 650 marriages. Videos, brochure: 01582 481725.

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My best marketing is by word of mouth, however, the only really successful advert which has caused major sales is Private Eye. I really never imagined what such a well-priced little advert could achieve – this indicates to me that you have a discerning readership who care about the environment – my sales in this my first season will have already avoided the use of £100,000 worth of Chlorine in the next ten years.

Wasn't Dame Edna great on your CD?

With enormous thanks to you and the lovely Andy and Dawn in advertising.

Yours,

Richard Gibbins

Floatron UK
Polhamton Farm
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Hampshire RG3 3ED
Telephone 01256 770246
Facsimilie 01256 771576
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'CONTACT GENUINE SINGLE WOMEN & Men online 24hrs. 60p/min, JCG, tn21 8xz – 09063 620246.

MAKE INTERESTING new FRIENDS UK/WORLDWIDE. Free details. DESTINY HEART (Dept PE) PO Box 10, Leeds, LS12 1YZ.

CHAT-&-DATE 0906 752 6299*, Live 1-2-1 Chat 0906 734 3206**, Gay Chat 0906 952 6006*. Calls cost *75p/**£1/min. from BT Landlines PO Box 17, Ashford, TN23 7YQ – http://www.adultphonechat.net

SEXY UK CHAT. Call: 09099 100 143 www.phoneflirts.co.uk 75p per min from a BT land line. PO Box 189 CA4 8GW

THAI LADIES – Superb videos. Colour brochure SIAM INTRODUCTIONS (established 14 years) as seen on TV (22 times!) – 01689 860880. www.siam-intro.com

EROTICA for discerning adults. Videos, DVDs and sex toys. Available from Blissbox at www.blissbox.com

INTIMATE CHAT Phone: 09099 100 146 – www.downtowngirl.co.uk 75p min from bt landline. PO Box 182 CT11 8GT

Findyourperfectpartner.com you may just click! Our MutualMatch system is the world's most accurate. 7-day free full membership

MATCHMAKER MAG for adults contacts. Over 900 photos. Approval copy from: MATCHMAKER, (S.76), Chorley, PR7 4BS. Or ring: 01257 483335 (24 hours).

THAI PARTNERS. New ethical agency introduces your ideal wife. Brochure, video 07810 562024 – kthcastell@aol.com

PERSON TO PERSON for genuine friends and partners, all ages, U.K. or overseas. Details: (Dept PE) P.O. Box 40, Minehead, TA24 5YS – 01643 709509.

ADDITIONS – 'ATTACHED' Discreet Loving Agency for married people. 020 8905 3304, 020 8958 9657.

ARE YOU INTERESTED in the swing scene for sexually liberated adults? If so, for the friendliest and most effective club, call 01452 790264 (24hrs) or visit www.honeycomb-uk.org

SPANISH HOLIDAYS. Choose your own lady! Special offer available. 01842 811012.

PRIVATE ADULT PENFRIENDS – 3x27p stamps to EPPS, PO Box 36, Dartford, DA2 7ZU.

ATTACHED? SEEKING ROMANCE? Call David at LOVINGLINKS 020 7602 8727. Info line 0906 550 1361 (call cost £1 a minute)– www.lovinglinks.co.uk Discreet dating at the speed of E-mail.

ARE YOU MISTRESS MATERIAL? We are retained by men of power, wealth and lifestyle. Call in complete confidence. 0207 602 8727.

HEDONISM CLUB. Adult Parties, Clubbing, Holidays. 09099 100185 (75p/min) – www. hedonism.org.uk

BEAUTIFUL THAILAND – the Personal Agency for meeting and marrying Thai Ladies. Tel: 01745 730571 or visit www.beau-thai.co.uk

EYE LOVE

STRIKING, SLIM, UPMARKET redhead, 44, sensuous, kind, charismatic – seeks liaison with well educated, generous, tall, clean-shaven male, 45+. B'ham, Warwickshire, Worcestershire. Box 1061.

ATTRACTIVE, INTELLIGENT, artistic, tall female 34, seeks tall slim single man 29-36. London area. muso2@aol.com

NASTY, INSOLVENT, PHILANDERER seeks attached, exquisite, kind, intelligent woman(45+). Philanderingtoad@aol.com

PERIPATETIC BLONDE with latin streaks (28F) requires mature gentleman (40)for intermittent, exhilarating dalliance. Must be virile, literate and solvent. Married? Please save the stamp. Box 1261.

SINGLE, GORGEOUS, GIRL, 34 – seeks powerful affluent older gentlemen to spoil and pamper. Box 2361.

ATTRACTIVE BUSINESSMAN, early 40s, single – wltm gorgeous lady to love, worship and adore and, be loved and adored in return. Non smoker, not a pet enthusiast, otherwise very open-minded with varied interests. Will send photo if requested. Sth. Manchester.

YES YES YES YOU, IT'S ME. male 35 very good looking, fit, unshockable. seeks female to play kiss chase. Contact 07949 453587.

SHY CLEVER WISTFUL F sought by M 54 W10 – wolstandixie@hotmail.com

SUCCESSFUL MULTI-MILLIONAIRE businessman seeks that special lady to cherish, pamper and spoil. Photo essential along with phone number. Box 0561.

LITERATE, FUN, professional male, 30s, WLTM slim but curvy arty female, 25-35 yrs. London/Mids/North. Email: cah0831@yahoo.co.uk.

40 YRS DIVORCED MAN, humour and intelligence plus other attractive qualities seeks something but not quite sure what. Must be woman and possess some personal velcro. Women wearing smiles are attractive, smiles and stockings irresistible. E-mail dragonheat@talk21.com

SENSITIVE, LIBERAL, academic female, 31, seeks similar male, 35 °V 45, interested in exploring life, for friendship or more. ballet-tanzerin@danceart.net

RAT-RACE boredom? Non-ostentatious entrepreneurial male, 38, offers fun-loving, adventurous female escape opportunity. Living onboard own 36' yacht, Spain, plans to sail Balearics next few months before wintering in Swiss apartment. Hopefully leading to romance/LTR. Oceanis36@yahoo.co.uk

ENGLISH GENTLEMAN, single, solvent, VGSOH, late 40s, 6'1" returning to UK after 23 years seeks 30s/early, 40s cheerful, charming, pretty, sexy lady of means for relationship. Englander1111@hotmail.com

TALL SLIM EDUCATED GENT, 45, humourous, attached, rich & generous, seeks selfish, sexy GSOH professional lady for October sun. If you'd enjoy being a self indulgent pleasure loving bitch for a week, let me be your servant. yourstruly@eircom.net

SLIM, ATTRACTIVE, NW3 lady, 50, WLTM civilised, solvent, discreet man to spend time with – interlude1uk@yahoo.co.uk

EYE JOBS

LAUNCHING TINY UNIQUE country hotel. Advertiser seeks loveable skivvy. Driving licence essential. Box 2261.

EYE WORK

IT WEIGHS 3LBS AND I'D QUITE LIKE TO USE IT. Experienced and creative MBA seeks interesting work. Box 0161.

LET ME OUT!! I'm trapped in a box of my own making. For 12 years, I worked as a PA for two of the most demanding CEOs in the country. I'm formidably efficient, deeply conscientious and inhumanly discreet. Now I want to engage my brain and have some fun as well. Please, please set me free. Box 0861.

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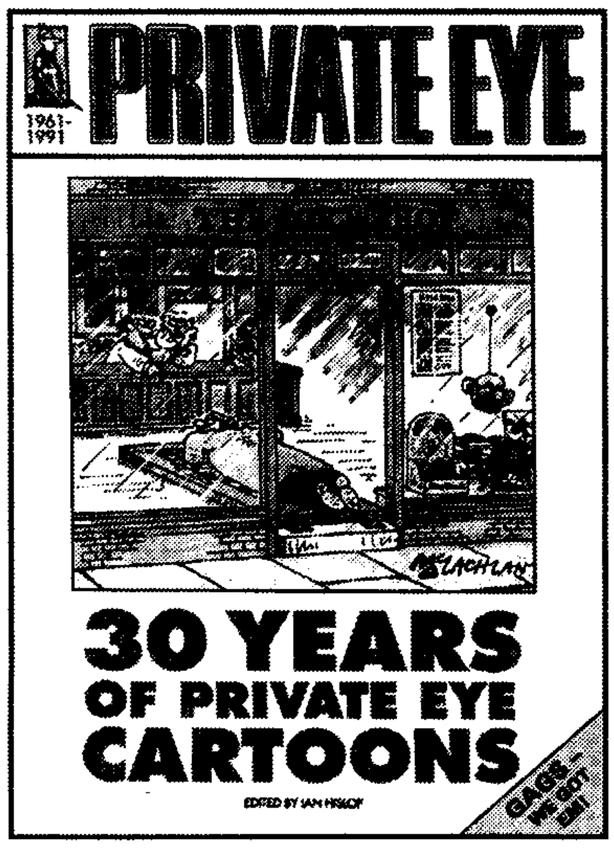

A collection of cartoons by the Eye's celebrated cartoonists, marking three decades of the finest artists in British humour

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TRAINING CONTRACT: Journalist left lucrative career for commercial solicitor dream. Needs training offer. Funded LLB 2(1) 2001, LPC (Commendation) 2002. Business experience, client-facing skills Will make damn good lawyer. Worth seeing? 0207 622 6624.

MOBILE, INTELLIGENT 30-something bloke on 'gardening leave' seeks challenging, exciting, possibly clandestine employment over next three months. Suggestions to/skills profile from weird_summer2002@hotmail.com

EYE EARN

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FILM COMPANY urgently requires funding for Somerset and Devon film project. E-mail: everydayinautumn@talk21.com

CHILDREN'S CINEMA PROJECT seeks investors. Call or Fax GRANT: 020 8544 0429.

AMBITIOUS, but well researched new business venture requires £5000 to remove ONLY stumbling block. Excellent opportunity for sponsors or investors. Please help! 07967 471733 Royal Bank of Scotland 16-14-18 10076154.

EYE NEED

HELP! struggling drama student (LAMDA) – cash support needed. May stop struggling for right person. Serious talent, Serious need. Telephone Gordon 077641 86065

TEACHER, lung cancer survivor needs help to clear debts. Has 12 year old daughter to support any help appreciated sort code 60-11-15, account number 08870284.

STRESSED OFFICER seeks financial help to prove bullying case. Currently employed but unwaged. All appeals delayed 5 months by union. Legal cost are covered – I need living expenses. All donations acknowledged. Reply Box 0361.

FUNDS NEEDED URGENTLY to continue psychoanalysis. Box 0761.

YOUNG SOLICITOR bankrupted following disastrous partnership with alcoholic. Desperate. LloydsTSB – 30-91-85, 0315658.

URGENTLY IN NEED OF £25,000, to be repaid in 2005 plus £5,00. Please help. Box 0961.

WIDOW WITH 3 TEENAGERS unable to work for next 6 months as receiving chemotherapy/radiotherapy. Appreciate any assistance towards eldest son's university tuition/accommodation fees. Thanks very much. HSBC 40-20-28, 60754781.

SEXUALLY ABUSED at Deepcut Barracks as a boy in the 1960's. Childhood stolen. Runaway at 15. Seeks £20,000 to clear bad debts and get an education. Lloyds sort-code 30-92-10, Account 07175764.

STRUGGLING YOUNG DOC wants to make sportsmen and women better but can't afford to go on the Masters Degree because they want £5500. Help me, help you. Any amount welcome. wje25@hotmail if you don't believe me. 30-00-05 01086786

TALENTED DESIGN STUDENT needs funds to buy equipment. Any help appreciated. NatWest 60-24-06, 208049113.

TALENTED WRITER seeks patron to dedicate more time to writing. Samples and further information available on request. Box 0261.

TALENTED YOUNG FEMALE seeks self actualisation. Donations gratefully received 16-25-27 10016118.

£30000 URGENTLY needed to pay creditors and avoid bankruptcy. Thank you. Nationwide 50144198 07 00 30.

CANCER: 8 MONTHS LEFT. Don't wish to wait/rot. Dream: worldwide trip. Hospitality offers: lastjourney@btinternet.com, donations: FirstDirect 40-47-84 40825719.

RECENT UNLUCKY chain of events have left me broke, with no hope of circumstances changing. desperately need funds to help start business - thank you. YORKSHIRE BANK 05-05-32, 30177784.

CATHOLIC PRIEST urgently needs funds for chapel. THANKS www.catholicvocation.com or Box 1161.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SCIENTIST. PhD. Employed. Working on reducing pesticides. Love job but in danger of loosing home. Teenage family. Need £98K to consolidate. Advice help please. Could service loan. Pay back £600 month. Surety. Second employment possible. Many skills experience. Anything welcome. Barclays 20 50 21. 00136093. barkeradp@hotmail.com

ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT seeks £10k to rid debt and start business. Firstdirect 40-47-84 32512440.

YOUNG,, TALENTED, aspiring female director has won one of two places offered by leading drama school on international directors' course. Urgently seeks Angels to help with expense. Starts September. If you want to back talent please contact Box 2061Elite families – if you have a conscience donate to an enlightened needy, family, many thanks. Abbey National: 09-01-26 51022726.

SLEEP APNOEA SUFFERER needs financial help to move to a cleaner environment. Please help. HSBC 40-13-07 41762915.

£10,000 NEEDED to pursue MSc course and get out of soul-destroying rut. Eternal gratitude. HSBC 40-08-09 61318411.

BARCEFACED CHEEK. Help me pay for my MA!! Urgent. Sort: 20-50-36, Account: 20736511.

£40,000 URGENTLY REQUIRED to relieve debt worries. Thank you. First Direct 90420638 40-47-81.

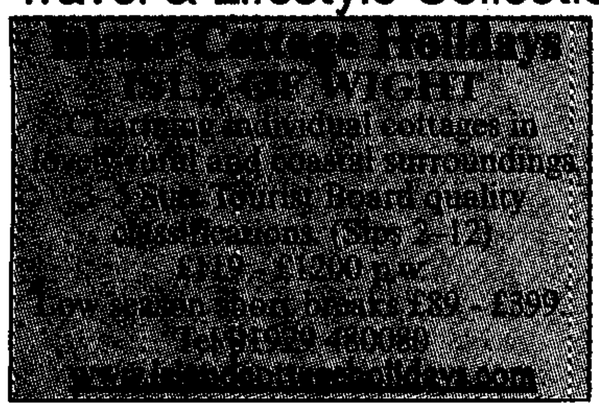
NURSING DISABLED PARTNER. Savings exhausted. Any help appreciated. 40-19-34, 71058037.

£23000 NEEDED to save pension/new start. Miscalculations/silly mistakes lost 15 year business. All help greatly appreciated. LLloydsTSB 77-91-31, 84406860.

EYE OBITUARY

ANNOUNCEMENT – This is to announce to JILL MARGARET GARDNER (of Little Aston Park, West Midlands) the death of her father CLIVE GROVE-PALMER on Saturday 20 July 2002. It is with sadness and regret that neither she nor her husband, John Christopher Gardner, could be prevailed upon to make contact with him, even IN EXTREMIS. "Finality is death" (James Stephens). Both Jill and John Gardner are Chartered Psychologists, members of the British Psychological Society and consult in the areas of child, bereavement and relationship counselling.

Travel & Lifestyle Collection



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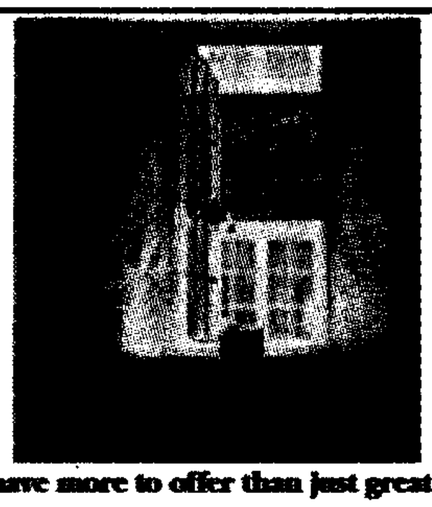

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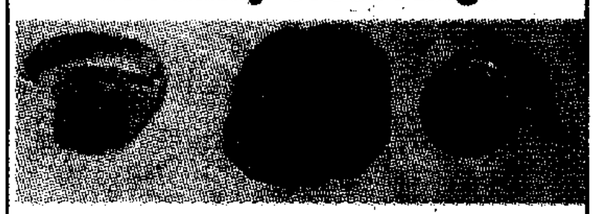

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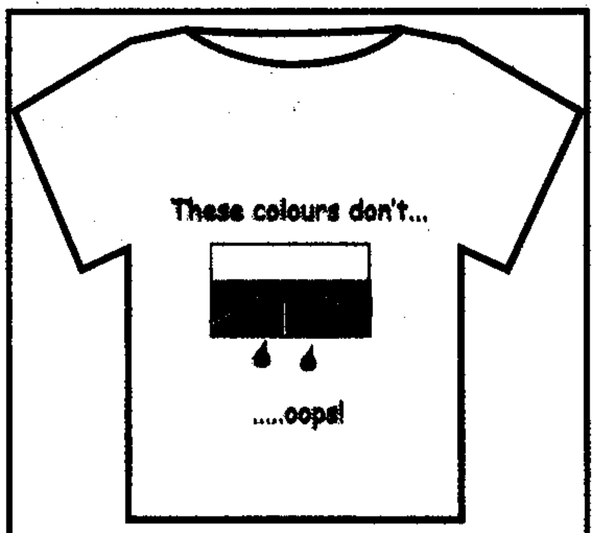

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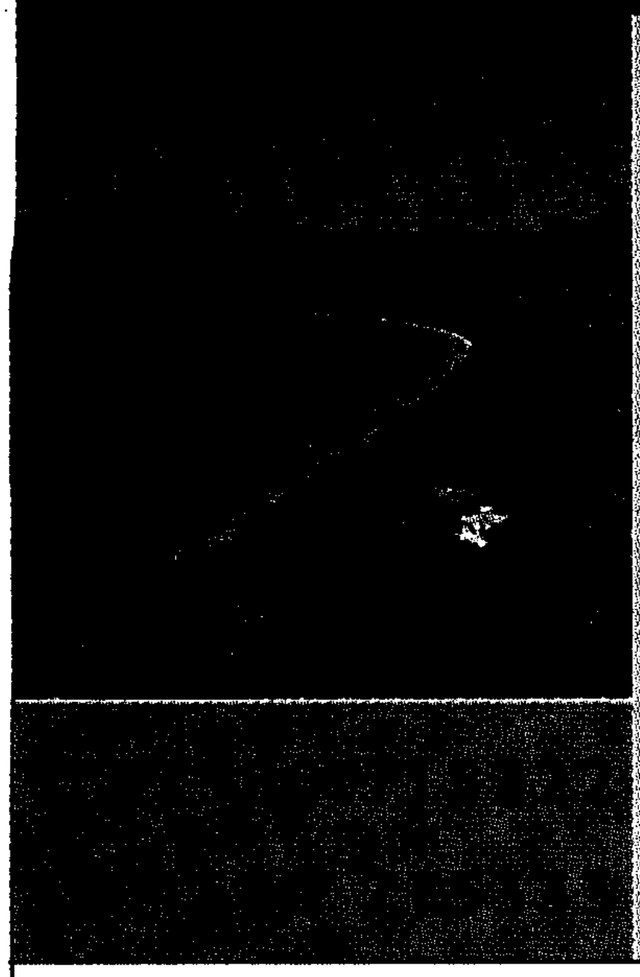

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The Coral Sands Resort is right on Trinity Beach and steps away from the restaurants, beach and car hire facilities. Supermarket, chemist and post office are all within walking distance. Opened seven years ago, many of our guests have already returned a second or third time. The popular L'Unico restaurant and bar are on site. Outside the main entrance there is a bus stop for services into Cairns and other beach areas.

Accommodation is in 1 and 2 bedroomed apartments that are furnished to a very high specification. All have separate sitting room and en suite facilities, superbly equipped kitchen, colour TV and large private balconies/patio.

Guest facilities include huge lagoon style pool set in tropical landscaped gardens.

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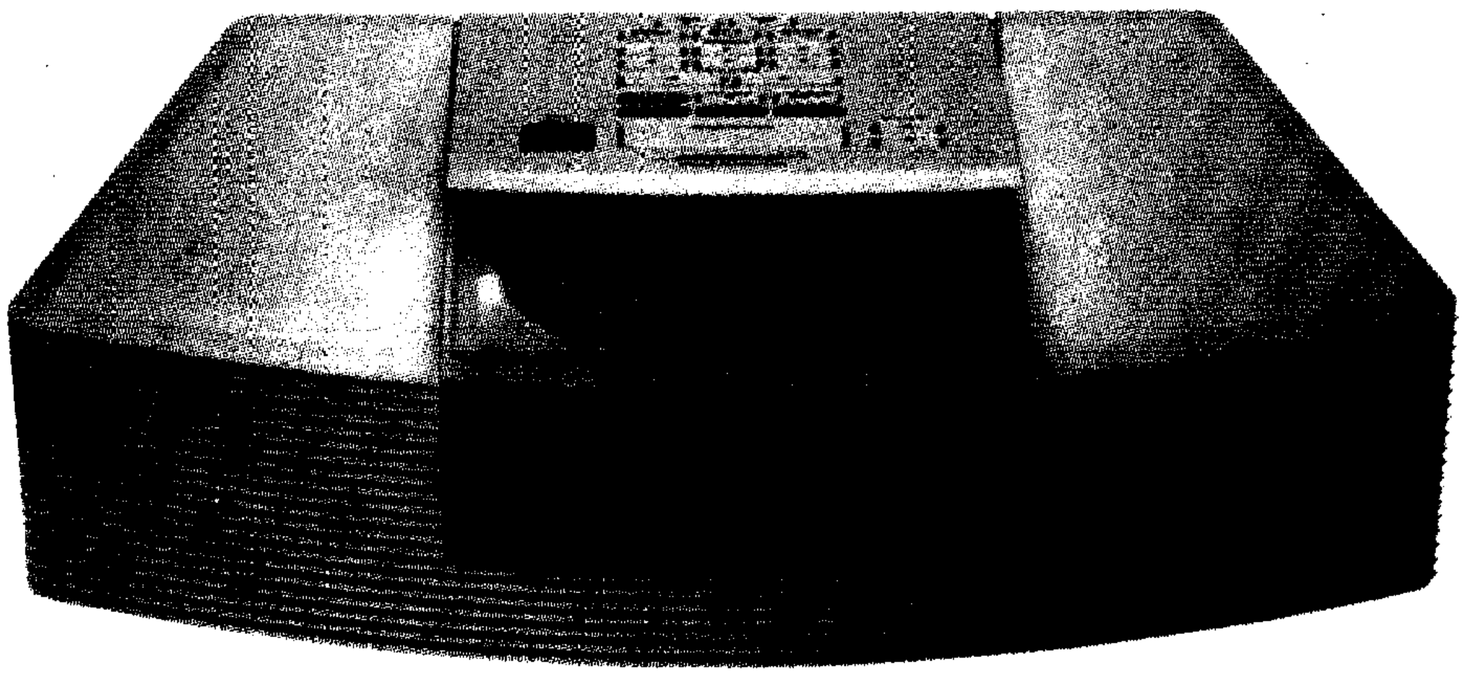

THE BOSE® WAVE® RADIO/CD. We can describe to you how clear and natural the sound is. We can explain how the small size, convenience and simplicity add to the delight. But can you really appreciate it without experiencing it?

That's why we created our in-home trial and risk-free satisfaction guarantee. It's the best way we can think of to give you the truest experience possible – hearing the rich, lifelike, room-filling sound exactly where you'll use it.

When you do, we think you'll realize that no other system this size matches the performance. That's because no one but Bose has acoustic waveguide speaker technology. It's a patented breakthrough so revolutionary, it won us the prestigious "Inventor of the Year" award – one of the many innovations that make us one of the most highly respected names in sound.

CALL TODAY AND DISCOVER A WHOLE NEW WAY OF LISTENING TO MUSIC. *Stereo Review's Sound & Vision* reports that "they'll think the sound is amazing." We think you'll agree. In fact, we think you'll find yourself enjoying music more – and enjoying it more frequently – appreciating notes and subtleties you never knew existed.

NO OTHER SYSTEM THIS SIZE DELIVERS OUR SOUND QUALITY. That's why we can offer you our no-risk satisfaction guarantee. You call us. We deliver the Wave® radio/CD or the Wave® radio to your home. You listen. You decide. Then, if you can bear to part with it, return it anytime within 30 days for a full refund of your purchase price. We'll even arrange to have it collected at no cost to you. It's that simple.

Call today to take advantage of our instalment plan which lets you make **10 low interest-free monthly payments.*** And ask about the clear and undistorted guarantee that lets you listen, and make up your own mind.

WITH THE BOSE SATISFACTION GUARANTEE YOU RISK NOTHING. CALL FREEPHONE TO ORDER AND LISTEN IN YOUR OWN HOME. IF YOU CAN BEAR TO PART WITH IT, RETURN IT ANYTIME WITHIN 30 DAYS FOR A REFUND OF YOUR FULL PURCHASE PRICE. WE'LL EVEN ARRANGE TO HAVE IT PICKED UP. NO QUESTIONS. NO HASSLES.

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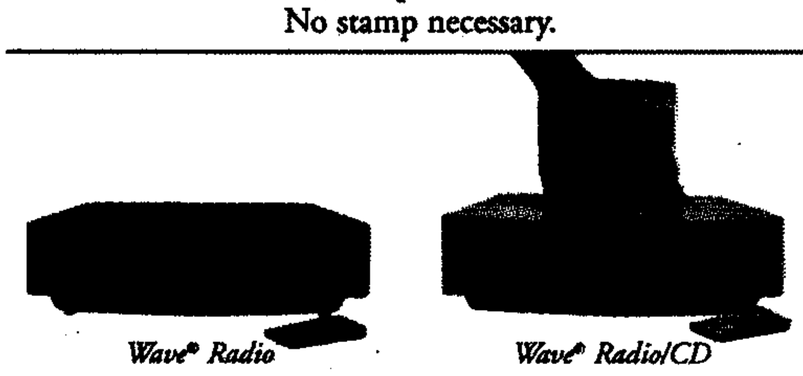
Wave® radio/CD and Wave® radio are available in Platinum White or Graphite Grey.

Send to: Bose Limited, Freepost EX 151, Exeter, EX1 1ZY.
No stamp necessary.



Wave® Radio *Wave® Radio/CD*

BOSE®
Better sound through research®

If you do not wish to receive mailings from carefully selected companies, please advise us.

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